Knowing God

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Knowing God

Ibn ʿArabī and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī's Metaphysics of the Divine

By

Ismail Lala

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Preface

"Is God apophatic or kataphatic, according to Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī?" This was the first question I was asked at a medical ethics conference by a complete stranger who had discovered my doctoral study was to do with the ubiquitous Sufi. Notwithstanding the abrupt nature of the enquiry, or perhaps because of it, I felt vindicated, for my research addressed this very issue through analysis of the term *huwiyya* (literally, He-ness or ipseity). But, in so doing, it also followed advice I was given during my first lecture: "Most of you will not make it in academia," our professor announced rather matter-of-factly, "for those of you who do, pick a guy." A question and a guy—these, then, are the twin pillars upon which is constructed the edifice of my research. My question: What is the true nature of God? My guy: ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 736/1335?), a disciple of the enigmatic Sufi theorist, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). So, technically, there are two guys, but one has to go through the master to get to the disciple.

This work is about the Sufism of Ibn ʿArabī and one of the chief disseminators of his thought, al-Qāshānī, specifically. But it is also about mysticism, generally, and the way we perceive God, and the manner in which He interacts with us and we with Him. With articles devoted to him numbering in the thousands, commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* alone in the hundreds, and translations in the scores, Ibn ʿArabī surely is, and has been, one of the most widely read and studied mystics of all time. His style is so tightly honeycombed with preciosity and involutions that it has at once enamoured and beguiled all who have had the good fortune, and bad luck, to stumble upon it.

So what sets this work apart from its precursors? For the answer, we must reconnect with our two acquaintances: the idea—a detailed analysis conducted from primary texts on a single term that is conspicuously emblematic of his "monism," and which is scrupulously contextualized in Ibn ʿArabī's two most enduringly popular works, the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*; and the guy—al-Qāshānī, who Toshihiko Iztusu in his seminal work, *Sufism and Taoism*, relies on more than Ibn ʿArabī himself to elucidate his Sufi *Weltanschauung*. The former adheres to the Joycian maxim that in the particular is contained the universal, and is a window that no one has yet peeked through; the latter a lacuna that no one has yet filled.

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Transliteration Guide

Consonants

ء	ʾ	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	ʿ	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	و	w
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	ه	h
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Short Vowels

◌َ- a

◌ُ- u

◌ِ- i

Long Vowels

ا ā

و ū

ي ī

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1 The Meeting

> He asked me, "Yes?" I replied, "Yes." His satisfaction with me grew on account of my comprehending him. Then, when I became cognizant of his being delighted by that, I disclosed to him, "No." Crestfallen, his color changed. He began to doubt what he had learned. He inquired, "How have you found the matter to be through spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) and divine outpouring (*al-fayḍ al-ilāhī*), is it the same as what we have been bequeathed by speculative thought (*naẓar*)?" "Yes-no," I answered, "and between yes and no, spirits take flight from their matter and necks from their bodies." He grew pale, a tremor seized him. "There is no strength nor power but in God," (*lā ḥāwla wa lā quwwa illā bi-Allāh*) he spluttered, sitting down. He understood to what I was alluding by that.[1]

A decisive meeting: the renowned philosopher—Abuʾl-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198)—and the young upstart mystic—Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī, speculative thought and spiritual unveiling, yes and no. Yes, perhaps there is no better place to start our journey on knowing God than with this anecdote. No, the journey will not be smooth. After all, the liminal topography we seek to navigate compels spirits to "take flight from their matter and necks from their bodies." The reason this passage—one of the most well-known and oft-cited of the *Futūḥāt*—furnishes us with a most apposite point of departure is that in it Ibn ʿArabī confronts the dichotomy of the innate human need for knowledge of God and His ultimate apophasis, the path that can be traversed but the destination that cannot be reached. This is the distance between yes and no. This, according to Ibn ʿArabī, is truly knowing God.

The negative theology at the end of this peregrination we already know. The primary concern of this work is not seeking Virgilian entry to Dis, it is the road to it, and, in particular, how far we can proceed along it before we must submit at the palisade of apophasis. This being the case, the reader would be forgiven for thinking that we will be unapologetically operating in the realm of epistemology. Yet, as Ibn ʿArabī identifies, knowledge of God with that of the self, and

1 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, 1:235. All translations from primary sources are my own.

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being as theophanic loci that serves God's yearning to know His self, the line between epistemology and ontology becomes decidedly blurred.

So knowing God through the self in the two most influential exegetical works of Ibn ʿArabī, namely *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, and those of his acolyte, al-Qāshānī, is the purpose of this enterprise. The foundational text by the disciple is *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*,[2] though extensive reference will be made to his various lexicons. This remit may, *prima facie*, appear feasible, but a consummately contentious figure like Ibn ʿArabī unites devotees and detractors on precisely two issues: his anfractuous diction and his dauntingly erudite locution. It is the task of any analyst, therefore, to rein in the Andalusian's periphrastic proclivities and unravel his rhetorical rosettes. There are many ways to achieve this. The Homeric paradigm of collapsing the universal into the particular nevertheless presents itself as an attractive option. If one moment, be it the wrath of Achilles, or the return of Odysseus, betrays an entire historic episode, then, too, may one term spotlight an entire worldview. Employing the term *huwiyya*[3] as an aperture into the semantic world of both mystics conduces to an adherence to the theological underpinnings of their respective argumentations, and allows our linguistic odyssey to proceed linearly.

But how do we answer the all-important question Quentin Skinner poses: "What are the appropriate procedures to adopt in the attempt to arrive at an understanding of the work?"[4] Ibn ʿArabī recounts a fantastical meeting that occurred in 599AH/1203CE, which may hold some clues:

> I was in Mecca on Friday, circumambulating the Kaʿba after the communal prayer (*ṣalāt al-jumuʿa*), when I saw a man of noble mien (*ḥusn al-hayʾa*), venerable and dignified was his bearing. He was circumambulating ahead of me. I fixed my gaze upon him that, perchance, I may

2 Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr Ibn ʿArabī*. This work has been misattributed to Ibn ʿArabī. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī gives three reasons why Ibn ʿArabī could not have authored this work: (1) all handwritten copies of the text have al-Qashānī's name on them, (2) in *Kashf al-ẓunūn* it is attributed to al-Qāshānī, and (3) "al-Qāshānī quotes Nūr al-Dīn al-Naṭanzī (d. 699/1300) in his interpretation of *surat al-Qaṣaṣ*, writing, 'And indeed I heard my *shaykh*, Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, may God sanctify his soul, say …' and Nūr al-Dīn al-Naṭanzī was known to be one of the principal teachers of al-Qāshānī. Whereas it is inconceivable that Ibn ʿArabī could have cited someone who died almost a hundred years after him." Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr waʾl-mufassirūn*, 2:295–256. This work will henceforth be referred to by its published title.

3 As the purpose of this entire study is to designate a definition and operational value for this term, it seems folly to reduce it to a one-word translation, especially since *huwiyya* functions as a symbol on multiple levels, as subsequent chapters will bear out.

4 Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 3.

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> recognize him. But I realized he was not a resident, yet he bore no vestiges of travel, as attested by his freshness (*ghaḍāḍa*) and vigor (*naḍāra*). I saw him walk up to two men who were circumambulating hand-in-hand; he passed through them, not separating them, and they perceived him not. So I began following him, step-by-step, putting my feet where he had just placed his—he did not raise his foot but I put mine in the place his foot had just been, my attention firmly on him, my sight glued to him, lest I should lose him. I walked up to the two men circumambulating hand-in-hand whom he had walked up to, and I penetrated through them following his footsteps, just as he had done, without separating them. This surprised me. When he had completed the seven circumambulations and intended to leave, I seized hold of him and greeted him. He returned the greeting and smiled at me. I did not avert my eyes from him for fear of losing him, for I suspected that he was a corporealized spirit (*rūḥ tujassad*) and that sight would fetter him. So I said to him, "I know you are a corporealized spirit." He replied, "You are right." I enquired, "Who are you, may God have mercy on you?" He retorted, "I am al-Sabtī ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd." I remarked, "I would like to ask you about the state you were in during your life in this world." "Speak," he pronounced. I began, "I have been informed that you are not called 'al-Sabtī' [lit. 'Saturday-man'] save for your turning away from [your spiritual vocation] only every Saturday that you may earn enough to feed yourself for the rest of the week." "That of which you have been informed is correct," he acknowledged, "it was like that." I asked, "Why did you single out Saturday and not some other day of the week?" He responded, "What an excellent question you ask!" Then he said to me, "I was informed that God began creating the universe on Sunday and finished it on Friday, so when it was Saturday, He rested, putting one leg over the other, and said, 'I am the King.' This is what has reached me from the ḥadīth (*akhbār*) while I was alive. I said to myself, 'By God, I will abide by this.'"[5]

The moral of the story, if indeed there is a moral (Ibn ʿArabī is not big on fables), is that sometimes to not lose someone, you must pursue them rigorously, unflinchingly, keeping your gaze fastened on them, placing your feet where they raise theirs. If this is true for al-Sabtī, it is truer for the infamously slippery Ibn ʿArabī. Yet his recondite circumlocution is not the only barrier to comprehension. Ibn ʿArabī's and to a lesser degree al-Qāshānī's works teem

5 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:381–382.

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with subterranean suppositions that need to be excavated if their thought is to be understood.[6] It is this process of quarrying and pursuing that affords the surest path to arriving at an understanding. However, the context cannot be wholly extricated from the equation if one is to arrive at a higher plateau of comprehension. For though this study is unashamedly synchronic in nature, focussing on the texts themselves without tracing their historical trajectory, there must be some awareness of the socio-religious milieu, some insight into the interlocutors, even if this diachronic aspect is not the emphasis. This study thus aims to integrate a synchronic accentuation with a smattering of diachronicity. But before we proceed to the texts, it behoves us to get to know our two principal authors.

2 The Master

Writing a biography of Ibn ʿArabī after Claude Addas' magisterial *Quest For the Red Sulphur* is rather like writing a biography of Johnson after Boswell—it is redundant. But that is not the purpose of this work, still less of this section. Here one merely adumbrates the vague contours of an extraordinary life that continues to beguile and enthral many with its matchless monomania, its excruciating askesis, and its delightful denouemont. The chief purpose of this subchapter, though, is to make a slanting approach to contextualizing Ibn ʿArabī in the overall superstructure of Islamic mysticism to better impart a sense of what his thought represents in the evolution of the Sufi tradition.

Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabī al-Ṭāʾī al-Ḥātimī was born on the 27th of Ramadan in 560/1165 in Murcia, Spain. His early life was typical of a boy from an affluent family: he was well-educated, married and worked as a secretary for the governor of Seville. At the age of 20, however, Ibn ʿArabī was formally initiated into the Sufi path. Subsequently, he travelled extensively in Tunisia, Egypt, Mecca, Anatolia, Iraq and Syria teaching, writing and enjoying the patronage of various rulers. Ibn ʿArabī finally settled in Damascus in the year 620/1223? and remained there till his death in November 634/1240.[7] He

6 This process of relentless pursuit and excavation to disinter underlying suppositions and arguments has been exemplified by Ronald Nettler in his work, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic Prophets*.

7 R.W.J. Austin, *Ibn al-ʿArabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, 1–14.

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authored hundreds of works, from brief treatises to the multi-volume *Futūḥāt*, and is widely regarded as one of the most important Sufi thinkers of all time.[8]

Ibn ʿArabī combines the traditional Islamic disciplines of Qur'anic commentary (*tafsīr*), Ḥadīth and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with the more rationalistic fields of cosmology, theology (*kalām*) and philosophy (especially Neoplatonism) to devise his own highly mature thought.[9] It is due to his unique blend of all these disciplines that his work is *sui generis*. This makes contextualizing him in the Sufi tradition especially problematic. On the other hand, rationalistic sciences did exert a profound influence on him.[10] To uncover these influences we must first take a brief survey of Sufism up to his time.[11]

Schimmel notes that "Sufism traces its origin back to the Prophet himself."[12] All Sufis most likely saw the tendencies in the prophetic example of Muḥammad as the basis for their entire outlook. But tracing Sufism, as a defined movement, to the Prophet or his Companions is fraught with difficulties, as observed by Christopher Melchert who writes that "classical Sufism crystallized in Baghdad in the last quarter of the ninth century CE. Biographers of the early eleventh century worked out a spiritual lineage for Sufism going back to the Companions of the Prophet."[13] The antecedents to the Sufis are thought to be the ascetics who promulgated none of "the theosophy which developed later."[14]

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) has commonly been seen as a major proponent of this movement. Reactionary in nature, this movement inveighed against a

8 The work of Osman Yahya in which he provides a list of over 900 books (1395 titles) remains the authoritative study on this subject. He shows, however, that many of these are misattributions and repetitions. (Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn ʿArabī: étude critique*.) Besides Addas' *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, useful information on the family of Ibn ʿArabī can be found in the introduction of Ibn ʿArabī's *Al-ʿAbādila* by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā. See Ibn ʿArabī, *Al-ʿAbādila*, 4–5.

9 Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 63.

10 Claude Addas has the following to say on this topic, "We should not allow ourselves to be deceived by the profound originality characterizing various aspects of the Shaykh al-Akbar's writings; this originality did, it is true, spring essentially from solitary meditation, yet his work was also steeped in the teachings of generations of earlier exemplars of Muslim spirituality. … Particularly instructive in this respect are the *Futūḥāt Makkiya*: the allusions to past masters with which the work is strewn are conclusive testimony … that he did not disdain to listen to them." (Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʿArabī," 2:911.)

11 For a useful survey of mysticism, see Michael A. Sells, trans., *Early Islamic Mysticism*.

12 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 26. Hamid Algar explores briefly the different theories regarding the origin of Sufism. See Algar, "The Naqshbandī Order," 123–125.

13 Christopher Melchert, "Early Renunciants as Ḥadīth Transmitters," 407.

14 A.J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, 33.

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perceived inclination towards worldly gain and away from religion.[15] Recent scholarship nevertheless casts doubt on such a cut-and-dried designation of al-Ḥasan. Suleiman A. Mourad comments that when one analyzes medieval literature, it emerges that there were two al-Ḥasans: "The highly pious al-Ḥasan who renounced this world and lived in constant sorrow, and the highly sociable al-Ḥasan who loved the delicacies of this world and the company of people."[16] In light of the contradictory evidence, he concludes that "one cannot verify beyond reasonable doubt any authentic part of the literary corpus attributed to him or any real aspects of his character."[17]

Waters are muddied further when we consider that a question mark hangs over whether the ascetics were even the precursors to the mystics. Nile Green, for instance, argues that it would be more accurate to see the early ascetics as "competitors" of the mystics rather than their forerunners.[18] Be that as it may, scholarly opinion seems to be skewed in favor of the view that they were antecedents and not opponents. Indeed, Melchert confidently asserts that "modern research has largely confirmed that Sufism grew out of this earlier, ascetic tradition."[19] How exactly the term "Sufi" came to be applied to these ascetics of the early tenth century remains to be seen, especially as "the early ascetics who were expressly called 'Sufis' were seldom characterized by mysticism."[20]

The Sufis, regardless of how they came to be known as such, or from which tradition they emerged, were constantly being accused of "overplaying the allegorical aspects of the Qur'an, claiming privileged, esoteric understanding of its contents and distorting its literal meaning."[21] This charge was most vociferously levelled against the so-called "intoxicated Sufis" among whom Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875) was the first.[22] Abū Yazīd was illiterate

15 For a detailed analysis of this, see Hellmut Ritter, "Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Studien zur Geschichte der Islamischen Frömmigkeit." See also *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ḥasan al-Baṣrī," which mentions al-Ḥasan's various stances against unjust rulers (though he did not advocate rebelling against them) as well as references to his numerous exhortations on forsaking the pleasures and extravagances of this world.

16 Suleiman A. Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*, 93.

17 Ibid., 94.

18 Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, 20–21.

19 Melchert, "Early Renunciants," 407.

20 Ibid., 415, f. 4.

21 *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, 2001–2006 ed., 137–159, s.v. "Ṣūfism and the Qur'an." William Chittick adds that the "Sufis did not deny the legitimacy of these [exoteric] sciences, merely the exaggerated claims for authority made by many of their practitioners." See Chittick, trans., *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts*, xii–xiii.

22 Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics*, 54. It is interesting to note that al-Bisṭāmī

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(*ummī*), a fact that was at once the source of his lasting fame and the root of the unremitting obloquy directed at him. This self-styled *ummī* emphasized the emotional aspect of a relationship with God, a relationship of such profound love that it was not to be sullied with knowledge.[23] "My Lord! Do not make me a scholar (*ʿālim*), nor an ascetic, nor a close associate [of Yours] (*muqtarib*)," he exclaimed in one of his ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*), "but if You welcome me, welcome me as one of Your things (*shayʾ min ashyāʾik*)."[24] Such behaviour, quite predictably, scandalized the orthodoxy and paved the way for more sober Sufis to condone and rationalize, temper and qualify the language of the ecstatics. The stalwart of Sufi orthodoxy, the man justly anointed as "the acknowledged representative of the orthodox Sufī path,"[25] Abuʾl-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910), sought to do just that by composing detailed apologia for the ecstatic utterances of people like Abū Yazīd.[26]

Due to the various perceived transgressions of the ecstatics, Sufism was increasingly viewed with the eye of suspicion. The efforts of al-Junayd notwithstanding, Sufism was still attracting the ire of the orthodoxy with its Islamic moorings under ever intense scrutiny. This skepticism and suspicion culminated in the execution of al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).[27] In the aftermath of such a seismic event, misrepresentation and marginalization of Sufism was rife. It is this hostile environment that Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990?) entered and, with his seminal *Kitāb al-taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, aimed to effect a religious rapprochement. His approach seems to be a powerful mélange of an academic style with deft

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became the standard against which a Sufi adept would gauge his own spirituality. Ibn ʿArabī, for example, concedes that al-Bisṭāmī's ecstatic utterances displayed an advanced mystical state, but he "also criticized the boasting (*fakhr*) that is inherent in ecstatic expressions (*shaṭaḥāt*), in this way putting himself in a position superior to that of al-Basṭāmī." (Carl W. Ernst, "The Indian Subcontinent," 432.)

23 Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: the Formative Period*, 5.

24 Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, *Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī: al-majmuʿāt al-ṣūfiyya al-kāmila*, 46.

25 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life*, 37.

26 Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb al-taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf* (*The Doctrine of the Sufis*), trans. A.J. Arberry, 54.

27 Louis Massignon's study remains the most authoritative work on this issue. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*. However, the study conducted by Ahmet Karamustafa reveals that the execution of al-Ḥallāj had little, if anything, to do with the now infamous statement, "I am the Truth" (*anaʾl-Ḥaqq*). This declaration, reported to be his purported promulgation of incarnationism, furnished al-Ḥallāj's enemies with the perfect excuse to curtail his political activism and extirpate his challenges to the highest eschelons of power. (See Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 25–26.)

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expurgation of more divisive Sufi statements to expose, or rather, establish the essential orthodoxy of the Sufi movement. The prominence of Qur'anic verses and traditions of the Prophet in the work seems to insinuate that Sufi practices are not a form of innovation (*bidʿa*), but rather a healthy and longstanding expression of faith (*īmān*).[28]

Almost a century after al-Kalābādhi, ʿAlī ibn ʿUthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī's (d. 465/1072?) *Kashf al-maḥjūb* takes his project yet further by meticulously taxonomizing Sufi denominations. Al-Ḥujwīrī divides the Sufis into twelve sects (*firaq*), each with their own kind (*ṣinf*) of Sufism and following their own spiritual master (*shaykh*). He considers two of these to be outside the pale of Islam due to their advocacy of incarnationism (*ḥulūl*). Al-Ḥallāj, significantly, is exonerated of such blasphemy. Instead, al-Hujwīrī qualifies his ecstatic utterances, attributing them to his union with the divine. This work served the dual purpose of disentangling the various strands of Sufism for the orthodoxy and setting boundaries which could not be transgressed, and had the dual effect of informing and propitiating critics.[29]

Although al-Junayd was probably the most influential of the early Sufi theorists, it is Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī (d. 350/961) who seems to be the most direct antecedent to Ibn ʿArabī. For not only does he display a marked penchant for paradoxes,[30] much like Ibn ʿArabī who revels in the ambiguity brimming under the façade of his metaphysical musings, he also alleges that his *Mawāqif* and *Mukhāṭabāt* were the products of divine illumination,[31] just as Ibn ʿArabī claims the *Futūḥāt* was dictated to him "by God through the angel of inspiration, whereas the *Fuṣūṣ* … [was] inspired by the Prophet."[32] More specifically, clear parallels may be observed between

28 Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb al-taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*. It is noteworthy that al-Qāshānī uses the same tools in his defense of Ibn ʿArabī's thought. However, Karamustafa questions the legitimacy of this view as Sufis did not, he argues, suffer an immediate backlash for their association with al-Ḥallāj following the latter's execution. Instead, they were regarded, for the most part, as a branch of the mainstream. Al-Kalabādhī's work was thus more an exercise in signposting a hitherto unknown faction of the religious community, rather than an exercise in apologetics. (Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 69–71.)

29 ʿAlī ibn ʿUthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*.

30 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 81.

31 See Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī, *The "Mawāqif" and "Mukhāṭabāt" of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī*.

32 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 265. It must be mentioned, however, that the concept of divine inspiration yielding a higher and deeper knowledge of scripture and, ultimately, God is something which was introduced, according to Wolfson, by Philo (d. 50 CE) who maintained that the inner meaning of scripture, what he termed "the Unwritten Law,"

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Ibn ʿArabī's *Mashāhid al-asrār al-qudsiyya wa maṭāliʿ al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*,[33] in which an instructive dialogue takes place between God and a worshipper (presumably Ibn ʿArabī himself) and al-Niffarī's *Mawāqif*, which has the same format.[34]

Al-Niffarī, influential though he may have been to Ibn ʿArabī's thought, could not have been alone in this regard, for one perceives in Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics mystical notes of a number of his predecessors. The Andalusian's ascension (*miʿrāj*), for instance, which he describes as having taken place while he was in Fez in 594/1198,[35] may be based on Abū Yazīd's own ascension,[36] or the concept of the "Seal of the Saints," so conspicuous in Ibn ʿArabī's self-hagiography, which was first coined by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320/932).[37] Abū Madyan, too, was an important influence.[38] Indeed, he is one of the few mystics whom Ibn ʿArabī reverentially cites and whose spiritual journey he assiduously charts.[39]

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could not be attained without divine aid. He thus advocated "a new kind of revelation, a progressive revelation," and believed that divine inspiration and the work of the Holy Spirit continued to provide true knowledge about God, even as he professed the cessation of prophecy. This betrays remarkable parallels with Ibn ʿArabī who claimed that, though prophethood had ended with Muḥammad—the seal of the prophets (*khātam al-anbiyāʾ*)—the door to sainthood (*wilāya*) remained open. See Wolfson, "The Philonic God of Revelation and His Latter-Day Deniers," 5.

33 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Mashāhid al-asrār al-qudsiyya wa maṭāliʿ al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*, 211–231.

34 Al-Niffarī, *Kitāb al-mawāqif wa yalīhī kitāb al-mukhāṭabāt*. See also Muḥammad ʿAfīfī Maṭar, *Quartet of Joy*, 70. In this work, the author acknowledges the affinities between al-Niffarī and Ibn ʿArabī and the former's influence on the latter. There is a burgeoning consensus in recent scholarship that al-Niffarī exerted at least some influence on Ibn ʿArabī. (See Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law*, 99, ft. 16.) It is also worthy of mention that al-Niffarī's impact was significant on many disciples of Ibn ʿArabī. Indeed, ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) even wrote a commentary on the *Mawāqif*. (See al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ mawāqif al-Niffarī*).

35 Addas, *The Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 153–154.

36 Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 4.

37 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 57. For a detailed comparison between the central concepts in the works of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Ibn ʿArabī, with a special emphasis on sainthood, see Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn ʿArabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought*, 131–170. For a more in-depth account of the concept of "Seal of the Saints," see the aptly titled *Seal of the Saints* (especially 128–147) by Michel Chodkiewicz.

38 Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masarra could also potentially be added to this list. (See Wael Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, xiii; Peter Schäfer, ed., *Wege mystischer Gotteserfahrung/Mystical Approaches to God*, 111; Denis E. McAuley, *Ibn ʿArabī's Mystical Poetics*, 16; Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, 918.) But caution needs to be exercised in hyperbolizing this influence as ʿAfīfī has shown that the impact of Ibn Masarra was far less pronounced than first alleged by Asín Palacios. (ʿAfīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyīd'Dīn Ibnul-ʿArabī*, 179.)

39 Claude Addas, "Abu Madyan and Ibn ʿArabi," 170. Martin Lings goes as far as to say that

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However, it can hardly be denied that Ibn ʿArabī's most "immediate model was [Abū Ḥāmid] al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)."[40] Franz Rosenthal even argues that the *Futūḥāt* was designed by its author to supplant *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, as evidenced by its overall structure, "which starts out with a thorough discussion of the meaning of the principal Muslim ritual obligations,"[41] in much the same way as its forerunner.[42] What this assertion, and that of Schimmel, who maintains that Ibn ʿArabī intellectualized Sufism and "was more a genius of systemization than an enraptured mystic,"[43] fails to acknowledge is that Ibn ʿArabī himself declared he did not "write" the *Futūḥāt* at all.

Whether the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* were written by Ibn ʿArabī or revealed to him, it is clear that he *believes* them to be the harvest of divine inspiration. Nor are these isolated instances of gnosis, for Ibn ʿArabī at times attributes mystical knowledge to his spiritual state, which affords him the opportunity to be privy to some divine secrets whenever he wishes, and, at others, to an unexpected spiritual unveiling that discloses theretofore unknown information. An example of the latter is the command to raise one's hands (*rafʿ al-yadayn*) dur-

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Ibn ʿArabī "may be considered as an heir of Abū Madyan." (Lings, *What is Sufism?*, 113.) For a detailed account of the life and career of Abū Madyan, see Vincent J. Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*. Cornell admits that Ibn ʿArabī was indeed influenced by Abū Madyan, as he cites him more than any other Sufi, but is circumspect about inflating it, given that the two never met and it took Ibn ʿArabī over four years to visit Abū Madyan's grave after his death, something that would be inconceivable for a devout disciple (*murīd*). (Cornell, *Abū Madyan*, 16, f. 35.)

40 Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn ʿArabī between 'Philosophy' and 'Mysticism,'" 35. It has been suggested that al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī sought to achieve the same thing: a détente between orthodoxy and Sufism, that Ibn ʿArabī in a way simply continued the irenic endeavors of al-Ghazālī. See Diané Collinson, Kathryn Plant and Robert Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, 53, where it states that a century after al-Ghazālī "Ibn Arabi set himself the task of making Sufist thought even more explicit and acceptable to those who were suspicious and disapproving of it." Indeed, we see palpitating among the sober statements of al-Ghazālī, proclamations that would have profoundly influenced Ibn ʿArabī. The definition of "divine presence" (*al-ḥaḍra al-ilāhīya*) proffered by al-Ghazālī is a case in point. For, according to him, it "is an expression for the totality of existents, all of them being part of the divine presence; for nothing exists other than the Exalted God and His actions." (A.I. Sabra, "*Kalām* Atomism as an Alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing *Falsafa*," 221).

41 Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn ʿArabī between 'Philosophy' and 'Mysticism,'" 35.

42 More pertinent to this study is al-Ghazālī's conception of God, which has many parallels with that of Ibn ʿArabī. Indeed, al-Ghazālī, like Ibn ʿArabī, emphasized both the unknowability and knowability of God. Moreover, "the very nature of Ghazali's views on the comparability and knowability of God cannot be fully understood without an understanding of his conception of the uniqueness and unknowability of God," much in the same way as in the works of Ibn ʿArabī. (Fadlou A. Shehadi, *Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God*, 3–4.)

43 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 263.

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ing prayer, which, Ibn ʿArabī alleges, was given to him by the Prophet himself in a dream.[44] It bears mentioning that there is no contradiction between Ibn ʿArabī's proclamation of deific provenance for his works and the product being highly rationalistic (perhaps more so than any such work before him, or since). What is questionable, it may be urged, is the implication of premeditation associated with the pronouncement that the *Futūḥāt* was meticulously designed or that one is either a "genius of systemization" or "an enraptured mystic." Such mutual exclusivity sets up chimerical binaries that are in no way conducive to an accurate portrayal of any Sufi, least of all one as complex as Ibn ʿArabī. Furthermore, the compartmentalization of any given Sufi in this manner assumes a criterion against which each may be measured, which, of course, does not exist.

Carefully considered or divinely inspired, the *Futūḥāt* does have many parallels with the *Iḥyā'*, as does Ibn ʿArabī with al-Ghazālī. One key difference between the two masters, nevertheless, is that although both emphasize the boundaries of reason,[45] Ibn ʿArabī is far more willing to employ language and all forms of conceptualization to illuminate divine secrets than his Persian counterpart. "Wherever the intellect claims to attain knowledge, unveiling can claim to know much more,"[46] asserts the Andalusian, yet forsake rationalistic and linguistic tools at his disposal to describe divine realities he does not.[47] Moreover, "he avoids the aphoristic style of so many of his predecessors and in fact goes to the other extreme by elaborating his ideas in great detail."[48] But through all these detailed metaphysical reflections, "always there is an implicit appeal to the intellect, even though he disclaims its authority,"[49] as it is only

44 See James Morris, "Ibn ʿArabī's 'Esotericism': The Problem of Spiritual Authority," 37–64.

45 Mohammed Rustom correctly observes that, according to Ibn ʿArabī, "Human reason can, by its very nature, never capture the entire message of revelation since revelation is supra-rational." See Mohammed Rustom, review of *An Ocean Without Shore*, by Michel Chodkiewicz, 2.

46 Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History," 96. See also Mahmud Kiliç, "Mysticism," 949, 956, where Kiliç makes the same point.

47 One reason for this, as Van Ess puts it, is that "For Muslims, reason, *ʿaql*, has always been the chief faculty granted human beings by God. … That divine gift was accepted and appreciated everywhere, even among ascetics and mystics." (Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 154). Ibn ʿArabī is a prime example of this.

48 Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History," 96.

49 Rustom, review of *An Ocean Without Shore*, 2. Ibn ʿArabī, at times, even refers to "intelligent individuals and logical thinkers" (*al-ʿuqalā' wa ahl al-qiyās*) as his colleagues (*aṣḥāb*), as noted by Franz Rosenthal. (Maria De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 169.)

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through reason that man can comprehend the profundity of divine opacity,[50] or, as Ibn ʿArabī puts it, "Through reason one knows but does not see, while through unveiling one sees but does not know."[51] The reason for this is that "the divine reveals itself through language and we know it through language, [but] it is also hidden by what it says, and hence Ibn ʿArabi also maintains, like many other mystics, the ineffability of the divine, paradoxically, through language itself,"[52] and, by extension, through reason itself.[53]

Ibn ʿArabī did not share al-Ghazālī's reservations about philosophy.[54] He even went as far as asseverating its utility, while maintaining that those who rely on reason alone are ultimately doomed to "stray from the road, because they think that the only mentor they can accept to guide them is their own thinking."[55] The assertion that some things are inherently beyond the ken of speculative thought constitutes a recurrent theme in Ibn ʿArabī's works, which constantly aver that "the power of thought (*al-quwwa al-mufakkira*) does not suffice to achieve a perception of the essence of God."[56] This is because, says Ibn ʿArabī, reason only takes one to a point, after that point is reached, the paradox inherent in the nature of the divine, which necessitates the harmony between opposites, or the redundancy of *principium tertii exclusi*, leads to confusion

50 It is noteworthy that the intellectual dimension of a mystical experience is one of five aspects into which the experience may be divided, according to A. Geels, who writes, "Mysticism is divided into: 1. The experiential: the experience itself. 2. The ritual dimension, that is, trying to 'reach beyond the world of multiplicity.' 3. The intellectual, which is the 'cognitive processing of the mystic,' in other words, articulation of the essentially ineffable. 4. The ideological, which is the tradition of the mystic. 'These traditions not only influence the experiences itself, but they also color the descriptions presented by the mystics.' 5. The consequential, which is 'the different ways in which the mystic is influenced by the experience.'" (A. Geels, "Mystical experience and interpretation," 213–214.)

51 Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 162–163.

52 Rustom, review of *An Ocean Without Shore*, 4. On the issue of the role of language in attempting to describe notions or experiences that are "supra-rational" in nature, see Izutsu, "Mysticism and the Linguistic Problem of Equivocation."

53 Ibn ʿArabī, we may thus say, represents the half-way house between those who believed that reason had no authority at all, and those, such as Avicenna (d. 428/1037), who put sole emphasis on reason. See Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, 167–186.

54 Michael A. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 24. For a detailed engagement of al-Ghazālī's position on philosophy, see Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 97–105.

55 Rosenthal, "Ibn ʿArabī," 8.

56 Ibid., 9. In maintaining the absolute apophasis of God, Ibn ʿArabī is part of a tradition inaugurated by Xenophanes. In believing that the intellect can only take one so far, he is part of Aquinas' camp, who drew a sharp distinction between knowledge that could be attained by natural light, and truths only available through supernatural divine illumination.

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and misguidance. How can these paradoxes be understood and be articulated? These are at once the challenges of, and the reasons for, Ibn ʿArabī's convoluted and abstruse language. Gershom Scholem touches on this issue when he asks,

> What kind of direct relation can there be between the Creator and His creature, between the finite and the infinite; and how can words express an experience for which there is no adequate simile in this finite world of man? Yet it would be wrong and superficial to conclude that the contradiction implied by the nature of mystical experience betokens an inherent absurdity. It will be wiser to assume … that the religious world of the mystic can be expressed in terms applicable to rational knowledge only with the help of paradox.[57]

Ibn ʿArabī makes full use of ostensibly paradoxical language in his quest to express the inexpressible.

It is significant that the cool ratiocination or pantheistic philosophization of which he is accused sit in stark contrast to his own proclamation of divine inspiration, for ʿAfīfī writes,

> Interpretation within reasonable limits is justifiable, but with ibn ʿArabi it is a dangerous means of converting Islam into pantheism or *vice versa*. This is most apparent in the *Fuṣūṣ*, and to a certain extent in the *Futūḥāt*, where the Qur'anic text and traditions of the Prophet are explained mystically or rather pantheistically.[58]

ʿAfīfī believes that the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet are not the sources of Ibn ʿArabī's inspiration. Rather, they are a cloak in which he drapes his own pantheistic notions.[59] He sees Ibn ʿArabī's thought as Neoplatonism, conceived through the eyes of al-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, remarking, "On the philosophic side ibnul ʿArabi is chiefly Neoplatonic … it was Neoplatonism *as understood* by the Ikhwanus-Safa that he knew."[60] The *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* are, for him, the most flagrant examples of this.[61]

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57 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 25.

58 Abu'l-ʿAlā' ʿAfifi, "Ibn ʿArabi," 402.

59 This opinion of Ibn ʿArabī's work has been seriously questioned by modern scholars. See Meena Sharify-Funk and William Rory-Dickson, "Traces of Pantheism in Islam," 157–158.

60 ʿAfifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din Ibnul Arabi*, 184.

61 For how Ibn ʿArabī differs from Neoplatonism, especially Plotinus, with the philosophy of

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It would be foolish to maintain that Ibn ʿArabī's works do not contain philosophical elements, as it is "unavoidable to associate Ibn ʿArabī with some vague mystic neoplatonism."[62] This is because his intellectual milieu was one of "multi-religious interaction" and had "a common language (Arabic), the common philosophical and scientific curriculum and the shared libraries," that "facilitated a close association of Jewish and Muslim intellectuals."[63] It is this intellectual-religious *mise en scène* that became the cradle for Andalusian mysticism;[64] what seemingly began with Ibn Masarra found its apogee in Ibn ʿArabī.[65]

Perhaps, going as far as declaring Ibn ʿArabī's outlook to be "philosophical mysticism" (*taṣawwuf al-falāsifa*), as ʿAfīfī does,[66] and by which he means that Ibn ʿArabī combines philosophy and mysticism by couching his personal philosophy in mystical jargon,[67] is swinging the pendulum too far. Indeed, ʿAfīfī views Ibn ʿArabī as somewhat of a failed philosopher who attired his faulty philosophy in mystical parlance to gain wider acceptance. Mincing no words in his introduction of the *Fuṣūṣ*, ʿAfīfī claims,

> Ibn ʿArabī, even though he was given skill (*basṭa*) in cogitation and reflection, and profundity (*ʿumq*) in spiritual discernment (*al-ḥiss al-rūḥī*),

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whom his metaphysics is most closely identified, see Rom Landau, *The Philosophy of Ibn ʿArabī*, 32.

62 Rosenthal, "Ibn ʿArabī," 5.

63 Sarah Stroumsa and Sara Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus," 215. One cannot, of course, discount the effect of the Christian tradition, though Asín Palacios attributes too much influence to it. (Denis E. McAuley, *Ibn ʿArabī's Mystical Poetics*, 4.)

64 For more details on the conditions and factors that allowed a particular brand of Sufism to flourish in Andalus, see Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 1–8. However, the author seems to attribute too much influence on Ibn ʿArabī to Fāṭimī-Ismāʿīlī activity in this region. (See below.)

65 Sarah Stroumsa and Sara Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus," 215. It is worth pointing out that one sees in Ibn Masarra's *Risālat al-iʿtibār* many tendencies which became commonplace in Andalusian mysticism. The foremost of these is Ibn Masarra's fusion of Neoplatonism and Qurʾanic language. However, one must be careful in discriminating between possible influences and deliberate assimilation. (See below.)

66 It is noteworthy that many modern scholars still view Ibn ʿArabī's exegesis of the Qurʾan as entirely philosophical. See, for instance, Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl*, 18.

67 It is more appropriate to classify Ibn ʿArabī's thought as "speculative Sufism," that is, *Sufism* infused with philosophy. Indeed, we see in Ibn ʿArabī's terminology that he does not spurn philosophical nomenclature, though in his thought the denotations are different. (Tobey Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," 276–277.) It is therefore not personal philosophy in mystical jargon that the Andalusian employs, but quite the reverse. If this is true for Ibn ʿArabī's terminology, then it is even more so for al-Qāshānī, as we shall see.

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> was still in need (*yaʿūz*) of precise philosophical methods (*al-manhaj al-falsafī al-daqīq*). … So he was, without doubt, a philosopher and a founder of an ideology (*ṣāḥib al-madhhab*). … However, he was a philosopher who preferred to overlook intellectual methods (*manhaj al-ʿaql*) … and adopted methods of emotional depiction (*al-taṣwīr al-ʿāṭifī*), allegory (*ramz*), and allusion (*ishāra*); and he relied upon ideational methodologies (*asālīb al-khayāl*) in his interpretations (*taʿbīr*). … So Ibn ʿArabī is, without doubt, a philosopher in terms of having a doctrine on the nature of existence (*ṭabīʿat al-wujūd*), like all philosophers, but he is a mystical philosopher (*faylasūf ṣūfī*) who has fabricated (*iṣṭanaʿa*) Sufi methodologies and allegories (*rumūz*) in order to interpret his own philosophy. This is one of the reasons for the complexity (*taʿqīd*) that we perceive in every one of the lines in his books.[68]

Subsequent scholars, Schimmel, Chittick, Mayer and others, make the antithetical assessment that it is actually mysticism framed in largely philosophical language. The divisiveness of the issue notwithstanding, ʿAfīfī's own trenchant position becomes somewhat untenable when he asserts that Ibn ʿArabī's writings were the harvest of divine unveiling.

> Ibn ʿArabī wrote his books under "the influence" (*taʾthīr*), which is a type of revelation (*waḥy*) or [divine] inspiration (*ilhām*). So in his lines is manifest that which was revealed to him, not what was determined by the faculty of reason (*manṭiq al-ʿaql*). This is why we have to look at his ideology (*madhhab*) holistically (*fī jumlatih*) and not just its details (*tafāṣīlih*). … So it [i.e. his ideology] is both philosophical and mystical; he has combined in it uniqueness of thought (*waḥdat al-tafkīr*) with the power of [spiritual] ecstasy (*wijdān*), and has tried to reconcile intellectual matters (*qaḍāyā al-ʿaql*) with the states of spiritual 'tasting' and unveiling (*aḥwāl al-dhawq waʾl-kashf*).[69]

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68 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, ed. ʿAfīfī, 1: 9–10. The complexity and inconsistency of Ibn ʿArabī's writing is a constant complaint of ʿAfīfī who says, somewhat hyperbolically, "This book [i.e. the *Fuṣūṣ*] is impossible to understand in its [original] language, despite its many commentaries." (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā takallama Ibn ʿArabī*, 135.) He explains his many failed endeavors to comprehend the *Fuṣūṣ*, writing, "I have read it [i.e. the *Fuṣūṣ*] with the commentary of al-Qāshānī many times, but God did not disclose any [of its meaning] to me! For the book of Ibn ʿArabī is clear, and every word in it—if I take them on their own—is comprehensible, but the overall meaning of each sentence [or, rather, of] many of the sentences are conundrums … which the commentaries simply complicate." (Ibid.)

69 Ibid., 10–11.

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ʿAfīfī may be uncertain whether Ibn ʿArabī is a philosophical mystic or a mystical philosopher. What is certain, nevertheless, is that one cannot concurrently allege the Andalusian master was experientially driven and surreptitiously percolated his personal philosophy through mystical terminology. True, all human experiences are shaped by our conceptual apparatus,[70] which could include their role in mystical unveilings, but the question here is not whether Ibn ʿArabī's conceptual apparatus informed his mystical unveilings, it is whether he deliberately sought to disguise his philosophical reflections in mystical language to make them more palatable.

A third phalanx of researchers seem to suggest that Ibn ʿArabī was both divinely inspired and working of his own volition, that the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* were both uncontrollable spiritual unveilings and premeditated. Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, for instance, comments,

> At times Ibn ʿArabī did this [i.e. write in a convoluted manner] deliberately and intentionally in order to justify this outlook with the ambiguity of his thought, and, at other times, because he was not under the control of himself.[71]

Ibn ʿArabī himself, rather predictably, announces that the *Futūḥāt* is not "concerned with results of proofs derived from thought, but having as its subject the results of divine revelation (*kashf*)."[72] The mystic, it would seem, is a curious amalgamation of Neoplatonic philosophy with Bisṭāmī-esqe ecstasy and Ghazālian uniformity. He has both the emotive volatility of Abū Yazīd and the discursive ingenuity of Abū Ḥāmid. He is "both extraordinarily original

70 See Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 6.

71 Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl*, 257.

72 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 9. It is interesting to note that Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 597/1191) claimed to have received knowledge from the divine through revelation, and subsequently formulated rational proofs for them. (Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, xviii–xix.) Therefore, one may say that, generally speaking, the following evolution occurred in Islamic philosophy: (1) Peripatetic philosophers, like Avicenna, largely based their doctrines on demonstrative proof alone and did not claim they were divinely inspired. Although, Avicenna, it must be conceded, was also interested in 'intuition' (*ḥads*). (2) Al-Suhrawardī claimed he was divinely inspired, but could adduce rational arguments and proofs for the knowledge he received. (3) Al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī ostensibly dispense with the arguments (while maintaining their legitimacy and having an implicit recourse to them) and thus are not philosophers *per se* as adduction of rational proofs is integral to being a philosopher.

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and totally traditional."[73] The same, however, cannot be said about our second author whose style is scrupulously scientific.

3 The Disciple

Unquestioning acquiescence to the master's commands, obliteration of the id, possible consignment to an impossibly abstemious life, and—the cherry—immemorial second-fiddle-status to the master. These are the fringe benefits of a career as a disciple. Ambling through the aureate world of the sumptuous central mosque, to which the resplendent mausoleum of ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Naṭanzī (d. 699/1300?)—al-Qāshānī's principal master—is adjoined, his name ringing out from the tree-lined streets, his sarcophagus in the eager lens of every tourist, it is difficult to see the attractions of a disciple's life. Especially when every inquiry into al-Qāshānī is greeted with a perplexed, "Who?" Yet, though many of the details of al-Qāshānī's life remain elusive, a biographical sketch may be drawn from the few sources that mention him.

3.1 *Name*

Al-Qāshānī seems to be a geographical designation, based on the city of Qāshān in the province of Isfahān, in modern-day Iran. There are four other versions of this name predicated on different vocalizations of the city. These are: al-Qāshī, al-Qāsānī, al-Kāshī and al-Kāshānī.[74] Ḥājī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657), nevertheless, also refers to him as ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Samarqandī, which has been the cause of much confusion.[75]

There are also different opinions as to what al-Qāshānī's name was. It has been recorded as Aḥmad in *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn*,[76] whereas others argue that this was his father's name.[77] Other candidates for the name of his father include: Muḥammad[78] and Isḥāq.[79] Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350) and Hājī Khal-

73 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 35. His style, too, as a result of this, is full of "ambiguity and explanatory dialectics; or [of] exposition and obscurantism, and [of] allusion and candour together." (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā takallama Ibn ʿArabī*, 138.)

74 Majīd Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasāʾil va muṣannafāt ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī*, 26–27.

75 Ibid., 27.

76 Ibid., 26.

77 Abdurrahim Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem' Adli Eserinin Tahkīk ve Tahlīli," 36.

78 Ibid. This has also been cited as the name of his grandfather. (Ibid.)

79 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 26.

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īfa believe that his father was also called Jamāl al-Dīn.[80] The agnomen (*kunya*) of his father is said to be either Abuʾl-Faḍāʾil[81] or Abuʾl-Ghanāʾim.[82]

Full names that have been recorded for al-Qāshānī are:

1. ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Abuʾl-Ghanāʾim ibn Aḥmad Abuʾl-Faḍāʾil ibn Muḥammad al-Qāshānī
2. Kamāl al-Dīn Abuʾl-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāshānī
3. Kamāl al-Dīn Abuʾl-Faḍl ibn Aḥmad, among others.[83]

Notwithstanding all the discrepancies of vocalization and differing opinions, the name that emerges as being most likely from the majority of sources is Kamāl al-Dīn Abuʾl-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Jamāl al-Dīn Abuʾl-Ghanāʾim al-Qāshānī.[84]

3.2 *Birth*

The exact date of al-Qāshānī's birth is not known.[85] What is known is that he was born in what is now Iran during the Ilkhanid period.[86] The date of his birth is believed to be between 650 AH/1252 CE and 660 AH/1262 CE, with his age, at the time of his death, being approximately 85 years.[87] The exact location of his birth is also unknown, though his agnomen strongly intimates that it was in Qāshān.[88]

3.3 *Education*

Al-Qāshānī was quick out of the gate, memorizing the Qurʾan and contemplating its meanings at a very young age.[89] He was spurred on to further study by his mentor, al-Naṭanzī, who was a member of the Suhrawardiyya order and received his mantle from Najīb al-Dīn Buzghush (d. 678/1279) in Shiraz. Buzghush was one of the principal disciples of Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, nephew of the founding father of the order, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Abuʾl-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168).[90]

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80 Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 35.
81 Ibid., 36. It is also claimed that this was the agnomen of al-Qāshānī's grandfather. (Ibid.)
82 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 25.
83 Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 34–35.
84 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 28.
85 Ibid.
86 Pierre Lory, *Les commentaires ésotériques du Coran d'après ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī*, 20.
87 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 28.
88 Ibid., 27.
89 ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, "Ḥaqāʾiq al-taʾwīl fī daqāʾiq al-tanzīl, 866," 4–5.
90 *Muqarnas: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, 40.

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The trajectory of al-Qāshānī's studies, according to Chittick, is a familiar one:

> Like all scholars, Kāshānī began by studying basic sciences such as grammar and jurisprudence. From there he went on to the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and *kalām*, but he found no way to verify his understanding. Then he thought that investigating the rational sciences (*maʿqūlāt*) and metaphysics (*ʿilm al-ilāhī*) would provide him with true knowledge and deliver him from wavering and doubt. For a time, he pursued this investigation. He writes, "My mastery of it reached a point that cannot be surpassed, but so much alienation, agitation and veiling appeared that I could find no rest. It became obvious that the true knowledge I sought was found in a stage beyond reason."[91]

That al-Qāshānī began with the propaedeutic sciences of Arabic language, physics (*ṭabʿiyyāt*) and logic (*manṭiq*) before progressing to metaphysics and, finally, Sufism, is evident from his letters to ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336).[92] It appears from his *oeuvre* that he was also somewhat of a medicine man, though one can draw no concrete conclusions from the scant medical allusions with which his works are interspersed.[93] Of his many treatises, *Al-Madbaʾ waʾl-maʿād* stands out for its dazzling panoply of Ḥadīth erudition, as well as an acute comprehension of the finer points of Arabic eloquence (*balāgha*).[94] Learned though he was in many sciences, it nonetheless seems that he did not pursue the disciplines of principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and principles of theology (*uṣūl al-kalām*) to any great degree. These two constitute the only theoretical lacunae in his scholarly arsenal.[95]

It has been posited that al-Qāshānī was between 25 and 35 years of age when he completed his formal study and turned to Sufism.[96] His erudition was renowned, with his student, al-Qayṣarī, referring to him as "the extremely learned imam" (*al-imām al-ʿallāma*) and the historian, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d. 723/1323), waxing lyrical about his deep learning. Indeed, the Shiʿite Sufi

91 Chittick, "The School of Ibn ʿArabī," 518.
92 Nūr al-Dīn'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī provides a detailed account of this correspondence. See Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, 306–312.
93 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 39.
94 Ibid., 40.
95 Ibid., 42.
96 Ibid.

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and philosopher, Sayyid Haydar Āmūlī (d. 787/1385), regarded him as being on a par with such luminaries as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 312/925?), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā (d. 429/1037), among others.[97]

3.4 *Teachers*

- **Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Naṭanzī**
  Al-Qāshānī's principal *shaykh*, al-Naṭanzī, encouraged him to seek out other teachers as well. Indeed, he is known to have had other teachers while he was taught by al-Naṭanzī.[98] It is estimated that al-Qāshānī spent almost two decades in Shiraz (from approximately 680AH/1281CE to 699AH/1300CE) studying with al-Naṭanzī until the latter's death.[99]
- **Shams al-Dīn al-Kīshī (d. 695/1296)**
  Al-Kīshī seems to have been one of al-Qāshānī's main teachers of exoteric sciences, in particular, the disciplines of Qur'anic commentary (*tafsīr*) and Ḥadīth.[100]
- **Ẓahīr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī Buzghush (d. 716/1317)**
  Ẓahīr al-Dīn was another prominent member of the Suhrawardiyya order.[101]
- **Aṣīl al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAlī ibn Abu'l-Muḥāsin ibn Saʿd ibn Mahdī al-ʿAlawī al-Muḥammadī (d. 685/1286)**
  Aṣīl al-Dīn was a descendent of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (d. 81/700), the third son of ʿAlī (d. 40/661), the fourth caliph.[102] Al-Qāshānī studied with Aṣīl al-Dīn till the latter's death in 685/1286.[103]

All these teachers, and others besides, from whom al-Qāshānī benefitted greatly, resided in Shiraz. It is therefore believed that for around two decades (from 680AH/1281CE to 699AH/1300CE) he remained in Shiraz, after which time he spent seven months in desert-dwelling seclusion on account of the deep trauma he suffered when his dearest teacher, al-Naṭanzī, passed away.[104] The next we hear, al-Qāshānī was in Baghdad at the time of al-Simnānī's teacher's death (Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Isferayinī, d. 717/1317?), and even met

97 Ibid., 40–41.
98 Ibid., 72.
99 Ibid., 85.
100 Necmettin Ergül, "Kāşānī ve Hakāiku't-te'vīl fī dekāik't-tenzīl Adli Eserinin," 37.
101 Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Appendix C. For more details, see Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 74.
102 For more details on Aṣīl al-Dīn, see Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 74–76.
103 Ibid., 85.
104 Ibid., 77.

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him before he passed away. It is thus believed that he moved to Baghdad in the early years of the eighth/fourteenth century.[105]

3.5 *Travels*

Based on the geographical location of al-Qāshānī's teachers and his scholarly output, we can trace a rough outline of the places in which he lived during different stages of his life. It is thought that he was born in Qāshān, spent much of his early adult life in Shiraz learning at the feet of the eminent scholars of that city, then moved to Baghdad and, finally, spent his last years working in Rabʿ-i-Rashīdī in Tabriz, under the patronage of Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318), and then his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn (d. 736/1336).[106] He is also purported to have travelled to Konya and Egypt, though details about these journeys are scarce.[107] The following tentative timeline can thus be constructed about al-Qāshānī's life.

Birth: Qāshān (650/1252–660/1262?)	→	Early years: Shiraz (till 699/1300?)	→	Later years: Baghdad (approx. 700/1301?)	→	Final years: Tabriz (approx. 721/1321?–736/1335?)

3.6 *Political Life*

Far from renouncing the trappings of a worldly existence, al-Qāshānī held a number of important governmental posts in his life and was one of the leading Sufis of his day. He was even Sufi laureate to Sultan Muḥammad Khudābanda Öljeytü (d. 716/1316) and, as such, was one of the four royal escorts on military campaigns.[108] Additionally, al-Qāshānī was a regular attendee of the major Sufi circles of his era, circles in which he came into contact with such personages as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Kashshī (d. 694/1295), ʿIzz al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Qāshānī (d. 735/1335) and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311), among others.[109] His association with Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), the foremost of Ibn ʿArabī's disciples and his spiritual heir,[110] seems slightly ambiguous, with some claiming he became al-Qāshānī's *shaykh* after al-Naṭanzī's death and others asserting he

105 Ibid., 86; Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 46; Ergül, "Kāşānī," 36.
106 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 90–92; Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 54; Ergül, "Kāşānī," 27.
107 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 86.
108 Ergül, "Kāşānī," 26.
109 Ibid., 23, 35.
110 Gerald Elmore, "Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Personal Study-List of Books by Ibn al-ʿArabī," 161–181.

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may have just taught him. Ḥadīth as al-Qūnawī is known to have educated al-Shīrāzī in this field and the two were in close contact.[111]

Such was al-Qāshānī's intimacy with the ruling elite that it made him the target of opprobrium; his association with the powerful vizier, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, was a source of particular concern for some of his contemporaries.[112]

3.7 *Personal Life*

Consonant with all other facets of al-Qāshānī's life, his personal life is steeped in obscurity. It is believed that he married and had at least one son; his son, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 764/1363), lived in Shiraz and wrote an addendum to his father's *Al-Iṣṭilaḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*.[113]

3.8 *Legal and Theological Affiliation*

Interrogation of al-Qāshānī's legal and theological affiliation seems premature, as it is not even known whether he was Sunni or Shiʿite. Certainly, he had a deep attachment to the Prophet's immediate family, the *ahl al-bayt*, and made a pilgrimage to the tombs of the caliph, ʿAlī, and his son, Ḥusayn (d. 61/680), in Najaf and Karbala respectively.[114] But imputing denominational association founded on such reverence, given that it is *de rigeur* for Sunnis also, is unwise. Both Sunni and Shiʿite scholars claim he belonged to their respective camps and adduce evidence to support their declaration. The Sunnis cite the entry on "The Sincere," *Al-Ṣiddīq*, in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, where al-Qāshānī writes,

> [It is] the one who takes sincerity to its highest level; he who had absolute belief in everything the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, brought, whether it be something he taught, said, or did, due to his inner purity and proximity to the innerness of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. This is because of the strength of his connection with him. It is for this reason that there is not, in the Book of God, a rank which comes between them as evidenced by His saying, "*They are those upon whom God has shown favor, among the Prophets, the sincere* (*ṣiddīqīn*)*, the martyrs, and the righteous*."[115] And he [Muḥammad], upon him

111 Ergül, "Kāşānī," 37–38.

112 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 86.

113 Ibid., 97–98.

114 Ibid., 86.

115 Qur'an 4:69. It is worth noting that the Qur'an had been misquoted in this edition, with the word "*maʿ*" (with) being omitted. The translation of the correct text is: "*They will be*

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> be peace, said, "Abū Bakr and I are like two racehorses: if he had overtaken me, I would have believed in him, but I overtook him so he believes in me."[116]

The Shiʿites, in defense of their claim, state that in *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān*, al-Qāshānī confers the honorific "*ʿalayhiʾl-salām*" (upon him be peace) on ʿAlī but not the other three caliphs.[117] In his treatise, *al-Madbaʾ waʾl-maʿād*, too, we receive no clarification as, though he cites a great many Ḥadīths, many of which are on the authority of sources unpalatable to Shiʿites, he, nevertheless, quotes from ʿAlī as well as the twelve imams.[118]

Little can be deduced from his principal students, since Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350) was Sunni while Qāḍī Saʿīd al-Qūnawī (d. unknown) was Shiʿite.[119] Furthermore, he is known to have exerted a great influence on the Shiʿite Sufi, Sayyid Haydar Āmūlī, who writes a fervent panegyric on al-Qāshānī.[120] Nor can one derive any definite details from the favor he gained with Öljeytü as, though at the time al-Qāshānī was at court, Öljeytü had converted from Sunnism to Twelver Shiʿism,[121] he was not very vigorous in enforcing it.[122] Indeed, two of his most powerful viziers, Saʿīd Chūpān (d. 727/1327) and Isen Qutlugh (d. 718/1318), did not convert with their Sultan.[123] Then there is also the purported reversion to Sunnism,[124] which is said to have occurred towards the end of his life.[125] More significantly, though, al-Qāshānī remained a favorite of Öljeytü's son and

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with those upon whom God has shown favor, among the Prophets, the sincere (*ṣiddīqīn*), *the matyrs, and the righteous*." "They," in this verse, refers to all who obey God and His Messenger, as is apparent from the verse in its entirety.

116 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 139. It bears mentioning that this tradition is largely regarded as a fabrication (*mawḍūʿ*), something that is clear from al-ʿAjlūnī's *Kashf al-khafāʾ*. See al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 139, f. 8.

117 Süleyman Uludağ, "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāşānī," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 25:5. Oliver Leaman and Sajjad Rizvi also seem to be of this opinion as they believe that al-Qāshānī endeavored to reconcile twelver theology with Ibn ʿArabī's concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. (Oliver Leaman and Sajjad Rizvi, "The Developed *Kalām* Tradition," 95.)

118 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 40.

119 Uludağ, "ʿAbd al-Razzāq," 25:5.

120 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 115.

121 Öljeytü's conversion is said to have occurred in late 708/1308, or early 709/1309. See Judith Pfeiffer, "Conversion Versions: Sultan Öljeytü's Conversion to Shiʿism," 41.

122 Ibid., 47.

123 Ibid., 41.

124 There is controversy surrounding the authenticity of this conversion, as Pfeiffer points out. (Ibid.)

125 Ibid., 43.

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successor, Abū Saʿīd (d. 736/1335), who also did not convert to Shiʿism with him and reversed many of the royal decrees issued by his late father[126] upon assuming the throne.[127]

If al-Qāshānī's popular works are parsimonious with clues, his little-known all-encompassing Qur'anic commentary, *Ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl fī daqā'iq al-tanzīl*, certainly is not. In this work, al-Qāshānī cites the opinions of all four Sunni imams, as well as the two principal students of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), Imam Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805) and Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), numerous times. He also quotes favorite Sunni authorities such as Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (d. 94/713), al-Shaʿbī (d. 109/727), Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 96/714), Qatāda (d. 118/736), Sufyān al-Thawrī (161/778), Sufyān ibn ʿUyayna (d. 198/814), ʿIkrima (105/724), Abū ʿUbayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 18/639) and ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. 93/712), among others.[128] This surely tips the scales in favor of Sunnism.[129] But after having cited these sources, he offers his preferred opinion from among them,[130] which would intimate that, though he was Sunni in general outlook, he did not adhere to a legal school and was a completely independent evaluator (*mujtahid muṭlaq*) who analyzed the Qur'an and Ḥadīth, and culled legal rulings therefrom.[131]

Being a prolific mystical lexicographer, details on al-Qāshānī's allegiance to a particular Sufi order would perhaps be deemed to be solid-ground territory. Yet here, too, details are scant and references exiguous. It is known that his most influential *shaykh*, al-Naṭanzī, was a prominent member of the Suhrawardiyya, though we do not know if al-Qāshānī followed him. There is even the insinuation by ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Tabrīzī (d. 1170/1757), in his commentary of the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, that he was Shādhilī.[132] Nor can conclusive deductions be permitted from the Sufi authorities he cites in his works, which range from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī to al-Junayd and al-Bisṭāmī, and from Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803) to al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).[133]

126 These included coins to be manufactured in the image of the Twelve Imams and Friday sermons to be delivered in the Shiʿite fashion. See Pfeiffer, "Conversion Versions," 47.

127 Ibid.

128 Ergül, "Kāşānī," 45.

129 It is also worth mentioning that the area of modern-day Iran during this period was mainly Sunni. See Pfeiffer, "Conversions Versions," 47.

130 Ibid.

131 For more details on what constitutes a *mujtahid* and the different classes of *mujtahids*, see Ibn ʿĀbidīn al-Shāmī, *ʿUqūd rasm al-muftī*.

132 ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Tabrīzī, "Ḥāshiya ʿalā iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya li'l-Qāshānī, n.d.," 5–6.

133 Ergül, "Kāşānī," 52.

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So much for what we do not know. What we do know is that he was a defender of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, and most particularly, of the concept of "oneness of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[134] This we know from his well-documented correspondence with ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī.[135] The correspondence between these Sufis also imparts, crucially, that Ibn ʿArabī's worldview was not always readily accepted, even in Sufi circles, and it was al-Qāshānī who assumed the pedestal of his metaphysical protector.[136] Moreover, we know al-Qāshānī taught the *Fuṣūṣ*, as al-Qayṣarī explicitly states that he took classes on it from him.[137]

3.9 *Works*

An enviably productive, bilingual author—especially in light of his ubiquity on the political and Sufi scene—al-Qāshānī penned many works during his life. The following is a list of his most well-known works in Arabic and Persian.[138]

Arabic

1. *Al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*
2. *Ḥaqāʾiq al-taʾwīl fī daqāʾiq al-tanzīl*
3. *Tāʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*
4. *Al-Tabṣira fī bayān iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*
5. *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān fī khaṣāʾiṣ al-fityān*
6. *Taḥqīq fī maʿnā al-alif waʾl-lām*
7. *Tadhkirat al-fawāʾid*
8. *Tafsīr āyat al-kursī*
9. *Tafsīr sūrat al-jumuʿa*
10. *Ḥilyat al-abdāl*

134 It is noteworthy that the term "*waḥdat al-wujūd*" was never coined by Ibn ʿArabī himself. The most probable originator of it seems to be Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn Sabʿīn, according to Chittick who writes, "Among the authors who may have used the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* in a technical sense are such disciples of Ibn al-ʿArabī as Ibn Sawdakīn (d. 646/1248) and al-Tilimsānī. However, the most likely source of the term is Qūnawī's contemporary Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 669/1270?)." See Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, 81.

135 Nūr al-Dīn'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī provides a detailed account of this correspondence. See Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, 306–312.

136 Uludağ, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāşānī," 5; Lory, *Les commentaires*, 20; James Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7.

137 Abdurrahim Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem' Adli Eserinin Tahkīk ve Tahlīli," 71.

138 This is the list of al-Qāshānī's works provided by Hādīzāda. The provenance of some of the works, nevertheless, is contested. See sections on *Rashḥ* and *Laṭāʾif* for further details.

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11. *Khulāṣat al-tadbīr*
12. *Al-Durra al-farīda*
13. *Al-Risāla al-asmāʾiyya*
14. *Risāla fī taʾwīl al-basmala*
15. *Risāla fī ʿilm al-akhlāq*
16. *Risāla ʿirfāniyya*
17. *Risāla fī bidāyat khalq al-insān*
18. *Rashḥ al-zulāl fī sharḥ al-alfāẓ al-mutadāwila bayn arbāb al-adhwāq waʾl-aḥwāl*
19. *Al-Sirāj al-wahhāj*
20. *Al-Sunna al-sarmadiyya wa taʿyīn miqdār ayyām al-rubūbiyya*
21. *Al-Sawāniḥ al-ghaybiyya waʾl-mawāhib al-ʿayniyya*
22. *Sharḥ Fusūṣ al-ḥikam*
23. *Sharḥ Qaṣīda Ibn Fāriḍ*
24. *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*
25. *Sharḥ Mawāqiʿ al-nujūm*
26. *Al-Fawāʾid*
27. *Fī taḥqīq ḥaqīqat al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*
28. *Al-Qaḍāʾ waʾl-qadar*
29. *Kashf al-wujūh al-ghurr li-maʿānī naẓm al-durr*
30. *Al-Kumayliyya*
31. *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām*
32. *Al-Mabdaʾ waʾl-maʿād*
33. *Al-Maʿādiyya*
34. *Nuṣūṣ*

Persian

1. *Aʾīn-i rahravān*
2. *Iṣṭilāḥāt-i ṣūfiyān*
3. *Pāsokh bih pursushī darbār-i yakī āz buzurghān*
4. *Tuḥfat-i ikhvān*
5. *Tashrīqāt*
6. *Taʿlīqa bih Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*
7. *Futuvvat nāmah*
8. *Fuʾād-i Fārisī*
9. *Mabdaʾ va maʿād*
10. *Nāmah bih ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla Simnānī*[139]

139 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 129–130.

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3.10 *Influences*

The following is a list of discernible influences and explicit citations in the major works of al-Qāshānī.

1. *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*
   Influences: *Al-Ishārāt waʾl-tanbīhāt* (Ibn Sīnā); *Khalʿ al-naʿlayn* (Abuʾl-Qāsim Aḥmad ibn Qissī al-Andalūsī, d. 545/1150?); *Sharḥ Khalʿ al-naʿlayn* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Al-ʿAbādila* (Ibn ʿArabī); *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif* (Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī); *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Qūt al-qulūb* (Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, d. 386/996); *Kitāb al-bāʾ* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Kitāb al-baḥth waʾl-taḥqīq ʿan al-sirr al-muwaqqar fī ṣadr Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Kitāb al-bayāḍ waʾl-sawād* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Kitāb al-jalāl waʾl-jamāl* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Kitāb al-ʿilm al-ladunnī* (Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī); *Kitāb al-mubashsharāt* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Kitāb al-malābis* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Mishkāt al-anwār* (Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī); *Al-Malāmatiyya waʾl-ṣūfiyya* (Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, d. 412/1021); *Al-Manāzil al-insāniyya* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn* (Abū Ismāʿīl al-Anṣārī, d. 481/1089); *Mawāqiʿ al-nujūm wa maṭāliʿ ahillat al-asrār waʾl-ʿulūm* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Al-Mawāqif al-Niffariyya* (Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī); *Nuskhat al-Ḥaqq* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Naẓm al-sulūk* (Ibn al-Fāriḍ, d. 632/1235); *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Al-Nikāḥ al-sārī fī jamīʿ al-dharārī* (Ibn ʿArabī).
2. *Al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣufiyya*
   Influences: *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Ibn ʿArabī); *Qūt al-qulūb* (Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī); *Nuskhat al-Ḥaqq* (Ibn ʿArabī).
3. *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*
   Influences: *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī, d. 700/1300?).[140]

The foregoing clearly demonstrates how profoundly the works of Ibn ʿArabī impacted al-Qāshānī. Indeed, of the 29 influences listed, 17 (almost 60%) are works of the Andalusian. Furthermore, such a crude and cursory quantitative analysis takes no account of the number of citations, which, if examined, would reveal an even deeper debt to Ibn ʿArabī, as many of the works here mentioned are completely bestrewn with his quotations.

3.11 *Death*

The date of al-Qāshānī's death, much like all other precise details of his life, is unknown. There are six opinions as to what the possible date could be: 720 AH/1320 CE?, 727 AH/1327 CE?, 730 AH/1330 CE?, 735 AH/1335 CE?, 736 AH/

140 Ibid., 121–123.

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1336 CE? and rather outrageously, 887 AH/1482 CE.[141] The first three dates we may dismiss as erroneous since there are some manuscripts, written in al-Qāshānī's own hand, which have the date of completion as being 735/1335?.[142] The final date (887 AH/1482 CE?) is a flagrant mistake by Hājī Khalīfa and requires no refutation.[143] This leaves us with two viable candidates: 735 AH/1335 CE? and 736 AH/1336 CE?. Of the two, the latter is the most likely as Dr. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd has researched the matter thoroughly and proposed that the exact date of al-Qāshānī's death was 3rd Muḥarram, 736 (23rd August 1335).[144]

3.12 *Why al-Qāshānī?*

Eminence and influence. These are the two fundamental reasons why al-Qāshānī serves as a candidate of particular importance for a study focussing on terminology. His eminence in the field—with three, increasingly detailed, lexicons—is discussed below under the individual works. So too is his influence, especially that of his commentary on *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam*, Ibn ʿArabī's terse summation of his entire thought, which has long been studied through the lens of al-Qāshānī's explanatory deliberations.[145] Al-Qāshānī's formalization of Ibn ʿArabī's formidably erudite metaphysics, as expressed in the *Fuṣūṣ*,[146] ensures his status as commentator *par excellence*.[147] Subsequent sections that burrow into the internal metabolism of each work puts flesh on these bones, but, at root, these are the nutshell reasons why al-Qāshānī has been drafted for this study. Ibn ʿArabī, with undeniable superstar status, may have been spared the ignominy of the "Why you?" question, but the same courtesy has not been extended to the disciple, and nor should it be extended to the linguistic periscope: *huwiyya*.

4 The Word

"Arbitrary" and "capricious," are adjectives that cannot entirely be avoided in a candid account about the selection of any term. The selection of the term

141 Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 77; Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 125–126.

142 ʿAlī al-Qāsimī, "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 718.

143 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 126.

144 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl*, 13.

145 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī ʿalā Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.

146 Michael Sells examines Ibn ʿArabī's highly sophisticated and polyvalent literary style in the *Fuṣūṣ*—a work he describes as one of "bewildering complexity." Sells, "Ibn ʿArabī's Polished Mirror," 122.

147 *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1998 ed., 19, s.v. "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī."

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that is at the center of this study must, of necessity, be somewhat arbitrary, it must be a little capricious, as all terms used by Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī are important and betray their worldview to some extent. Still, if all terms are important, some are more important than others. *Huwiyya* plays a central role in these Sufis' semantic *Weltanschauung* and often incorporates other terms within it (such as *anāniyya*, whose existence is implied by *huwiyya*, as the latter is a third person pronoun-derived abstract noun and the former is a first-person pronoun-derived one). Fundamentally, though, it is because *huwiyya* plays a key part in the two mystics' account of God—the origin and objective of everything in their outlooks—that it has been selected for, ultimately, every facet of Ibn ʿArabī's (and al-Qāshānī's) worldview returns to God.[148]

And there is another reason. Yes, *huwiyya* functions as a designation of God, but it is an intensely implicative term. Derived from the "pronoun of absence"[149] (*huwa*), it underscores the non-manifest aspect of God.[150] And though both mystics' definition bears this out,[151] it is only Ibn ʿArabī who most often uses the term to denote God's absolute unknowability—a state in which He is truly non-manifest. Al-Qāshānī, striking out on his own, deploys it principally to connote the second emanatory stage in which there is a prefiguring of creation within the divine consciousness. So it transpires that though both believe *huwiyya* is the non-manifest aspect of God, Ibn ʿArabī uses it to accentuate God's absolute incomprehensibility and remoteness from His creation, whereas his disciple employs it to underscore the fundamental way in which He is connected to it. But it is not just in this surreptitious feat of semantic prestidigitation that al-Qāshānī demonstrates he is his own man, it is also in his overall style and approach.

5 The Presentation

Perplexing periphrasis, oracular announcements and sententious statements ensure that style and approach are foregrounded in any analysis of Ibn ʿArabī's works. The pendulum swings between pithy and prolix, from rambling to rational, and often in the same work. While the denotation of *huwiyya* constitutes a major difference between al-Qāshānī and Ibn ʿArabī, the delivery of

148 Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 7.

149 This, according to William Chittick, is a third-person pronoun. See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 211.

150 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 394, n. 15.

151 See below for Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī's definitions of *huwiyya*.

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this denotation is no less significant. This difference derives from divergent objectives and readership. For though it is patently clear that technical terminology plays a central role in the writings of both Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī, with Annemarie Schimmel going as far as to allege that Ibn ʿArabī's primary influence on Sufis who came after him was that of a lexical systemizer,[152] and al-Qāshānī was widely regarded as Ibn ʿArabī's terminological formalizer,[153] nevertheless, there is a difference between the two since Ibn ʿArabī is not as fastidious about explaining his terms as his disciple.

Indeed, Muḥammad ibn ʿĀbidīn al-Shāmī (d. 1252/1836), in his *chef d'oeuvre*, *Radd al-muḥtār*, writes that one of the main reasons Ibn ʿArabī is misunderstood is a lack of familiarity with his technical nomenclature.[154] Vociferous in his defense of Sufis in general and Ibn ʿArabī in particular, he declares:

> The Sufis work within a technical framework and mean by their terms things which are not known to the jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), so whoever attributes to them meanings which are known [among jurists] will consider them to be unbelievers.[155]

But if Ibn ʿArabī is not scrupulous about explaining his terms, it is only because it is not his purpose. This is precisely why al-Qāshānī undertakes the elucidative endeavors he does: to clarify these terms for those not well-versed in them and in order to mollify jurists who would seek to condemn Ibn ʿArabī and his ideas, or as Ronald Nettler puts it, "Al-Qashānī employs a literary method of

152 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 273. Julian Baldick, in apparent agreement with this assessment, calls Ibn ʿArabī "Sufism's greatest systematizer." Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 82. I find this categorization to be a little unfair, not least because it constrains Ibn ʿArabī's pervasive influence to the sphere of philology. That Schimmel and others can even argue such a case, however, illustrates the importance of terms in Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics.

153 *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1998 ed., 19, s.v. "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī."

154 Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1176/1762) agrees that Ibn ʿArabī's lack of clarification of some terms has led to confusion about the concept of oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). See Abdul Haq Ansari, "Shah Wali Allah Attempts to Revise '*Waḥdat al-wujūd*,'" 205.

155 Muḥammad ibn ʿĀbidīn al-Shāmī, *Radd al-muḥtār*, 6: 379. This is a thinly veiled attack on Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) who famously classified Ibn ʿArabī as an unbeliever. (See Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*.) Ibn ʿĀbidīn cites Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Tanbīh al-ghabī bi-tabrīʾat Ibn ʿArabī* in which is stated that, though Ibn ʿArabī was a saint, his works should not be read. (See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-ghabī*, 4.) Al-Dhahabī also mentions that this was al-Suyūṭī's own position. (Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr*, 2: 302.)

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stylization and formalization of Ibn ʿArabī's technical terms and concepts."[156] His appeasement, nevertheless, seems to be as much about style as it is about content.[157]

An inquiry into the approach and composition of al-Qāshānī's *tafsīr* and lexicons will reveal that his pacification of the orthodoxy is not limited to legitimization with Qurʾan and Ḥadīth. Rather, it is supplemented by placation through use of familiar language and manner, chief among which is his seemingly "guidebook" style approach for autodidacts who may have wanted to learn about Ibn ʿArabī's thought, as these works were excluded from law colleges and *madrasas*.[158] The format of al-Qāshānī's works also appears singularly tailored for use in public debates that were enduringly popular at the royal Mongol court, and which were known to be powerful sources of promulgation of one's ideas and thoughts, if the correct patronage was secured.[159]

This, then, represents one of the fundamental differences between the authors: it is a difference in style and language due to a variance of purpose. Whereas Ibn ʿArabī is vibrant and assimilates in his works all the methods and modes of articulation at his disposal, al-Qāshānī is comparatively dull, reserved and conservative in both his expression and approach. His works look and feel much more like scholarly studies of Sufism or step-by-step manuals for Sufi neophytes on the path, and much less like extemporaneous enunciations of the experiential. This is because, ultimately, the texts are what readers can use to access, through intellect, something of the experiential, in as far as it is possible to go through language.

Al-Qāshānī, it seems, intentionally structures his works not only to educate and instruct Sufi neophytes in Ibn ʿArabī's thought by guiding them through the stages of spiritual development until they reach the heights of the "people of tasting" (*ahl al-dhawq*), who are the Andalusian's sole audience, but also to assuage Ibn ʿArabī's detractors, who do not comprehend what he means and level charges of heresy against him in ignorance. In order to achieve these goals, al-Qāshānī is far more rigid and consistent in his use of terms and their denota-

156 *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1998 ed., 19, s.v. "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī."

157 Al-Qashānī seems to have been greatly influenced by Sadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) in this regard, for al-Qūnawī is "the model of logical consistency and point-by-point reasoning," something that al-Qāshānī's works also reflect. Chittick, "The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī," 141. See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, xviii. For a detailed account of al-Qūnawī's life and thought, see Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*.

158 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 2.

159 Colin Turner, *Islam Without Allah?*, 51; Louise Marlow, *Hierachy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*, 172.

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tions. He does not share his master's penchant for loose characterizations and ambiguous meanings as this detracts from his purpose of clarity and conciliation. Indeed, this is one of the reasons his own mystical vocabulary is appreciably smaller than that of his master.[160] Still, we would be unjust if we limited al-Qāshānī's contribution to mere education and pacification, depriving him, in the process, of all creativity and originality.

What al-Qāshānī achieves with the *Taʾwīlāt* is no less monumental a task than what Abu'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) achieved with his Qur'anic commentary, *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*. I would go further. If al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* was the precursor to Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt*, it would not be overstating the case to assert that al-Qushayrī's *Laṭāʾif* was the precursor to the *Taʾwīlāt*.[161] Al-Qushayrī's objective was to recast Sufism in a more 'moderate' light.[162] Al-Qāshānī's objective was to recast Ibn ʿArabī's Sufism in a similarly moderate light. Al-Qushayrī seeks to project a Sufism that is acceptable to everyone; as his endeavor is essentially eirenic, much like that of al-Qāshānī, many of the devices he employs are ones picked up by al-Qāshānī who, nevertheless, deploys them in other ways and with other measures to fulfil his own aims.

One of the main arrows in al-Qushayrī's quiver to effect a détente between the exoteric sciences and the esoteric ones, between the traditional scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and the Sufis, and between knowledge (*ʿilm*) and gnosis (*maʿrifa*), is to expunge the dividing line between them. No longer are exoteric sciences and esoteric ones competing forces; ejected are the ideas of scholars as opponents of Sufis. Now "every [type] of knowledge *is* gnosis, and every [type] of gnosis *is* knowledge" (*kull ʿilm maʿrifa, wa kull maʿrifa ʿilm*).[163] This means that despite its primary commitment to mystical interpretation, exoteric and esoteric exegesis do not quarrel for the prized real estate of authentic commentary in the *Laṭāʾif*; al-Qushayrī instead uncovers the true mutualism between these two channels of inquiry.[164]

This co-habitation of exoteric and esoteric interpretations of the Qur'an in both commentaries has the additional effect of situating the mystical component within the larger commentary framework, thereby normalizing it. Not as selective in singling out only mystical verses for interpretation as his prede-

160 Lory, *Les commentaires*, 30.
161 It is also a response to al-Simnānī's commentary. See the conclusion for details.
162 Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 126.
163 Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 2: 601.
164 Nguyen, *Sufi Master*, 122–123.

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cessor, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 376/986), was wont to do,[165] al-Qushayrī's exegetical egalitarianism has the effect of at once showcasing the scriptural symbiosis between "the sciences of divine law" (*ʿulūm al-sharīʿa*) and the "sciences of reality" (*ʿulūm al-ḥaqīqa*) and imbuing the mystical component with a certain familiarity.[166] Al-Qāshānī appropriates this approach—employed not only by al-Qushayrī but also by Sahl ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896)[167]—in the *Taʾwīlāt*, to similar effect.

However, where al-Qushayrī and al-Qāshānī part ways with al-Tustarī is in their considered delivery of mystical intrepretations. Not erratic scrawlings of ecstatic utterances like their Sufi forebear, al-Qushayrī and al-Qāshānī's commentaries are calculated compositions to be embraced as didactic tools for the instruction of initiates.[168] Indeed, to achieve their pedagogical aims, both give a wide berth to profuse citations so their works would be compendious rather than comprehensive, scrupulously studied rather than sporadically cited, and become core texts rather than arcane encyclopedias.[169]

Another point of stylistic convergence between al-Qushayrī and al-Qāshānī is in the primacy they both give to personal reflections in their respective commentaries. Nguyen observes that al-Qushayrī offers a highly original and intensely personal commentary of the *basmala*, something that is emblematic of his interpretive disposition,[170] while Lory notes that al-Qāshānī periodically provides interpretations that are based, above all, on his spiritual unveiling (*kashf*).[171]

A final mystical concept and instructional device from al-Qushayrī's commentary that al-Qāshānī seems to have enthusiastically embraced is the notion of a spiritual hierarchy. Al-Qushayrī not only believes that exoteric knowledge is complementary to esoteric knowledge, he also believes it is introductory to it[172]—a sentiment that al-Qāshānī wholeheartedly shares. Going further, al-

165 See al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr*.

166 Ibid., 127.

167 See al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*.

168 Nguyen, *Sufi Master*, 130–131. This aspect of al-Qāshānī's commentary is dealt with in much more depth in the coming chapters.

169 Nguyen, *Sufi Master*, 131, 143–144.

170 Ibid., 129.

171 Lory writes, "Qāshānī fournit directement son interprétation, s'appuyant avant tout sur sa propre « inspiration intérieur » …" Lory, *Les commentaires*, 157. This does not derogate from al-Qāshānī's primary task of explaining Ibn ʿArabī's spiritual unveiling. The two facets co-exist in his works. See conclusion for details.

172 Nguyen, *Sufi Master*, 242.

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Qushayrī delineates a specific mystical pecking order according to the "spiritual attunement" of the person.[173] What al-Qushayrī calls "spiritual attunement," al-Qāshānī labels "preparedness" (*isti'dād*).

There is no doubt, then, that these two consciously compiled commentaries have a lot in common. Yet, though both may be calculatedly put together and share much of the same genetic makeup, the result is still very different. Whereas al-Qushayrī's personal interjections are replete with rhetorical flourishes and extravagant language, al-Qāshānī maintains a succinct and sober style—the better to carry his message. This may be because, though a firm pedagogical intent is perceptible in both works, with each assuming their audience is acquainted with their technical lexicon, al-Qushayrī presumes insertion of his commentary in a *khānqāh/madrasa* curriculum and as a vehicle for mystical truths to be imparted through the master-aspirant (*shaykh-murīd*) paradigm.[174] Al-Qāshānī, on the other hand, seems to view his work more as an extra-curricular tool for the autodidact.[175] This means his delivery is simple and streamlined, it assumes familiarity with mystical nomenclature—which could be garnered autodidactically with his lexicons—while adopting all feasible measures to reduce or eliminate confusion. And for all their similarities, this is the chief and most telling difference between them: whereas al-Qushayrī's commentary is *khānqāh/madrasa*-style, al-Qāshānī's is extra-*khānqāh/madrasa*-style.

This divergence is most noticeable in al-Qushayrī's incessant allusions to the *shaykh-murīd* relationship, and al-Qāshānī's relative disinterest in it.[176] Indeed, even the most acclaimed illustration of the special *shaykh-murīd* relationship in the Qur'an—that of Mūsā and al-Khiḍr—in which the latter assumes the role of the *shaykh* and the former that of the *murīd*, is never referred to in this way by al-Qāshānī.[177] Al-Qāshānī does make a half-hearted mention of the path of wayfaring (*sulūk*), such as when he writes, "[Mūsā's saying,] '*May I follow you*,' is manifesting his desire for wayfaring (*sulūk*) and ascending to perfection."[178] But the requirement of a *shaykh* is never formally acknowledged. Moreover, he

173 Ibid., 243.

174 Ibid., 130–131. Al-Simnānī's commentary also has this characteristic. See conclusion for details.

175 For more detail on this issue, see the conclusion.

176 Al-Qushayrī refers to the *shaykh-murīd* relationship in his commentary of verses: 4:59, 4:60, 8:16, 11:16, 16:15, 24:62, 40:22, 59:5, 96:1, among others. In none of these verses is any reference to the *shaykh-murīd* relationship made by al-Qāshānī.

177 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:340–342.

178 Ibid., 1:340.

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recruits the story to accentuate the importance of realizing the preparedness (*istiʿdād*) and striving to achieve this purpose,[179] something that can ostensibly be done alone.

Al-Qāshānī, then, fashions his commentary to harmonize the exoteric and esoteric interpretations of the Qurʾan, much like al-Qushayrī. But unlike al-Qushayrī, he further seems to fashion it as a tool for the autodidact to gain an awareness of Ibn ʿArabī's Qurʾanic metaphysics. This commitment to educate the autodidact permeates not only the *Taʾwīlāt* but also his lexicons.

For all his propitiative and instructive labors, however, al-Qāshānī is still a Sufi adept of remarkable standing, and what he achieves in his lexicons and the *Taʾwīlāt*, though informed by these motives, is no less remarkable. In his interpretation, a nuanced difference here and a slight change there have the cumulative effect of forging a different worldview from the one his master conceived.[180] Most importantly, he achieves this without compromising or diverging significantly from the conceptual outlook of his predecessor. It is still Ibn ʿArabī's *Weltanschauung*, but facets of it, such as God's connectedness to His creation and the didactive imperative, have been emphasized more than others. In doing this, if al-Qāshānī quietly breaks ranks with Ibn ʿArabī when it comes to diction, and, to a lesser extent, content and ideas, he is fiercely faithful to him in terms of the Qurʾan being central to his outlook.

6 The Qurʾan

A Muslim thinker proclaiming that his religious outlook is the truest interpretation of the Qurʾan is rather like an Epicurean saying pleasure should be sought, or a Marxist saying fiscal inequality is a pretty bad thing. Yet pronouncements are not proofs, and orthodox assertions need to be assessed in the tangible terrain of text. If Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī's theological viewpoint is truly Qurʾan-centric, and not adventitious with Qurʾanic decking, this will be borne out in the manner in which the verses are conscripted. Are they the cynos-

179 Ibid.

180 It may be argued that al-Qāshānī cannot simultaneously carve out a new worldview and remain faithful to that of Ibn ʿArabī, especially since it is Ibn ʿArabī's worldview that is the basis of his own. This is true to an extent, and depends on what one means by the term "worldview." If it denotes an entirely new and original outlook, then, no, al-Qāshānī does not achieve (or indeed aspire to achieve) this. However, if it is used to mean a complete outlook that is substantively different from other such worldviews, then, yes, al-Qāshānī does manage this, and it is in this sense that the term is employed here.

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ure of the writing around which concentric circles of exegesis orbit? Or are they simply expedient accouterments to buttress personal perspectives? These are questions only the texts can answer. Let us consider Ibn ʿArabī's two works first.

6.1 Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam

What is a "*tafsīr*," or Qurʾanic commentary? What are the conventional components that permit induction into the pantheon of this genre? Less concerned with delineating the formal features of a Qurʾanic commentary, and more with the overall *telos*, a much looser definition is here adopted.[181] Few would argue that the *Fuṣūṣ* is not a Qurʾanic commentary in a formal sense, but it is still Ibn ʿArabī's understanding of certain verses of the Qurʾan,[182] which a close textual examination reveals.[183] Ibn ʿArabī's very first passage, when he introduces the reason for the creation of Ādam, is a case in point:

> Verily, the Truth,[184] be He praised, created the entire Cosmos in an existence that was an indistinct, unprepared thing, without a spirit, so it was

181 It must be conceded that none of the works here considered (including the *Taʾwīlāt*) conform to the criteria formulated by Norman Calder in his seminal work on this genre. (See Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of the Genre.") It is worthy of note that, according to Maḥmūd Ghurāb, Ibn ʿArabī did pen a formal commentary. He claims that it is referred to in the handwritten copies of Ibn ʿArabī's works. Being incredibly detailed, it was many volumes and covered the entire first half of the Qurʾan. It was called *al-Jamʿ wa'l-tafṣīl*. (Ibn ʿArabī, *Raḥma min al-Raḥmān*, iii.)

182 Nettler believes that the *Fuṣūṣ* is nothing but Ibn ʿArabī's interpretation of the Qurʾan. He writes, "For him [i.e. Ibn ʿArabī] the metaphysics clearly *is* the meaning of the Qurʾan and of some later religious textual traditions." (Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 14.) However, he maintains that there is an element that is not traditionally Qurʾanic; the extra-Qurʾanic language is merely a consequence of this. There are therefore two facets that co-exist: a Qurʾanic one and an extra-Qurʾanic one, but the extra-Qurʾanic conceptual outlook still constitutes the meaning of the Qurʾan, even if its terminology, ideas and language are not, as it is how Ibn ʿArabī understands the Qurʾan.

183 It is worth mentioning that both of the works of Qurʾanic interpretation authored by Ibn ʿArabī analyzed here vary starkly in their style and presentation. Abū Zayd comments that "The language of the *Futūḥāt* is distinguished by its simplicity and prolixity, whereas the language of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* is distinguished by how concentrated and condensed it is, which takes it close to the borders of obscurity." (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā takallama Ibn ʿArabī*, 135.) This is because the *Fuṣūṣ* is a "concentrated précis of the main meanings of the *Futūḥāt* and other books." (Ibid., 136.)

184 This is the literal meaning of *al-Ḥaqq*, and is used by many mystics to refer to God, as He is the only One with true, absolute existence, the only Truth. I have chosen not to leave it untranslated even though, linguistically, "the Truth" means simply something "that is proven, which it is not permissible to deny," and this does not encompass or convey what

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> like an unpolished mirror.[185] And it is the nature of divine decree that it does not prepare a locus except so that it may receive a divine spirit, which is expressed as "breathing in it." So it is naught save the attainment of preparedness of this undifferentiated form for the acceptance of the outpouring: manifest and perpetual (*al-fayḍ: al-mutajallī al-dā'im*), which has always been and shall always be. Thus, nothing is left but the receptacle, and the receptacle cannot be without His holiest outpouring. So the matter is from Him entirely: its beginning and its end, *to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned*,[186] as it began from Him.[187]

The entire metaphysics of Ibn ʿArabī is here on display: his qualified monism,[188] and even his emanationism—though this is merely alluded to by the phrase "*al-mutajallī al-dā'im*." All of this is linked to one verse of the Qur'an, or even part of a verse, *to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned*, which serves as the source of Ibn ʿArabī's entire metaphysical outlook and is one of his favorite Qur'anic citations. Not erecting the structure of our analysis on quantitative determinations, we may still justifiably highlight that Ibn ʿArabī mentions this verse eight times in the *Fuṣūṣ* and a staggering 68 times in the *Futūḥāt*. Numbers can be false friends; operating as extra-contextual monoliths, they can be beacons to false conclusions. But we observe in this passage that the verse is integral to Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics, and not simply a convenient slogan he adopts to feign Qur'an-rootedness. The frequent repetition of the

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the term denotes here. I have, instead, opted to explain the translation that a smoother rendering in English may result. (ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 96.)

185 For an analysis of the concept of the mirror in Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics, see Sells, "Ibn ʿArabī's Polished Mirror."

186 Qur'an, 11:123.

187 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 1:49.

188 I use the term "qualified monism" as opposed to "monism" because I believe reducing Ibn Arabī's metaphysics to an unmitigated monism is fundamentally misrepresenting his worldview. The Andalusian fastidiously underscores the difference between the One who has absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*) and a reflection of that whose existence is contingent (*muqayyad*) on Him. He writes in the chapter of Ādam, "And even if we describe ourselves, in every way (*jamīʿ wujūh*), as He describes Himself, there is still a difference (*fāriq*) [between us and Him]: it is nothing but our being in need of Him (*iftaqārunā ilayh*) for existence (*wujūd*) and our existence being dependent on Him (*tawaqquf wujūdinā ʿalayh*) in order for us to be possible, and His independence (*ghinā'*) of the like of which we are in need of Him." (Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūs*, 1: 54.) At another juncture, he warns, "Do not fall in the blasphemous error of the sect called *Ḥulūliyya*, who believe that another soul, even another being, can be infused into them. Know that He is never in anything, nor is anything in Him." (Ibn ʿArabī, *The One Alone*, trans. Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, 234.)

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part-verse merely serves to reinforce this assertion. There can be little doubt, then, that Ibn ʿArabī believed himself to be propounding the true meaning of the Qurʾan.

We see how Ibn ʿArabī's ontological vision, for him, constitutes the meaning of the Qurʾan; it is not simply a means to bolster his viewpoint. Everything Ibn ʿArabī writes about *al-insān al-kāmil*, about absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*) and contingent existence (*wujūd muqayyad*), about divine manifestation (*tajallī*), about preparedness (*istiʿdād*) to accept this *tajallī*, about almost everything, is therefore presented by him as a commentary of this part-verse. This is not to suggest that it is a formal commentary, of course, which is another matter entirely. Though it is true that this is only how Ibn ʿArabī understands the part-verse but, given that we have only his insistence that everything was imparted to him by mystical unveiling, coupled with a lack of any documented forerunners whose ideas he may have assimilated,[189] we have recourse only to what he has written. This is why there is an emerging scholarly consensus about the centrality of the Qurʾan for Ibn ʿArabī.[190]

Ibn ʿArabī relies heavily on the Qurʾan because in his quest to articulate ineffable realities, particularly with regard to the unfathomable divine essence, he often has need to go beyond linguistic boundaries, and this he does with the aid of the Qurʾan, which is not of human authorship. This phenomenon is explicated by Josef van Ess:

> If God is the Other *par excellence*, he is beyond our reason just as he is beyond our senses. The world can be analyzed through phenomena, but God is accessible only through revelation.[191]

His outlook and the Qurʾan, therefore, become a complex lattice which is so tightly interwoven that it is almost impossible to disengage the Qurʾan from his Sufi metaphysics. This is because though his metaphysics is extra-Qurʾanic in the sense that it has concepts and ideas, nomenclature and notions that are not ostensibly present in the Qurʾan, it is still his comprehension of the Qurʾan. Furthermore, this is entwined with a parallel interpretation that is Qurʾanic, with seamless cohesion between the two. So Ibn ʿArabī acknowledges the Qurʾan bespeaks a reality that cannot be expressed, one which transcends linguistic

189 Although there are some that are thought to have influenced him, and whose imprints some of Ibn ʿArabī's work bear. (See above.)

190 See, for instance, Maria De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 172.

191 Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 88–89.

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boundaries. Yet he also makes full use of linguistic tools and is immersed in language; he is a man of language; thus the ineffable experiential reality and its detailed articulation co-exist in him.

William James argues that mystical experiences are too varied and too personal to make any claims to universal authority. But this is precisely what Ibn ʿArabī does. His spiritual unveiling is at once personal and public. It is a personal experience made public through language. In the presupposition of attainable meaningful articulation, and its actual articulation, he anticipates what Wittgenstein would later describe as the shared public world in which the most intimate thoughts are public because the words that frame them only gain currency from social and public usage.[192]

It is this very feature of the mystic's confidence in his experiential knowledge to not only make the private public, but to attribute the same certainty to the empirical as to revelation itself that prompts Abū Zayd to write, "It is difficult, in many cases, for someone to separate the Qurʾanic text and the words of Ibn ʿArabī,"[193] especially since, for him, the two are the same, his writings being the only real meaning of the Qurʾan—a claim he allows himself due to the certitude of *kashf*-derived knowledge.[194] Correspondingly, Ibn ʿArabī often cites a verse without even deeming any commentary necessary, so axiomatic does he believe the explanation to be in the sphere of his mysticism. Abū Zayd, elaborating on this issue, comments,

> It is curious how Ibn ʿArabī strikes a balance between his style of writing and the Qurʾan, for the Qurʾanic verses may appear explicitly without any connection to monistic thought, even if in their reality and inner meaning there is a connection, such are the works of Ibn ʿArabī.[195]

192 Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, 801.

193 Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl*, 258.

194 This reliance on the Qurʾan and Ḥadīth is a trait shared by many of Ibn ʿArabī's followers. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, for instance, declares that all knowledge comes from the Qurʾan and the Prophetic example, the *sunna*, and if we do not see it, then it is only because our meagre preparedness veils us from this reality. He also remarks that knowledge may be categorized into three types: the first is what he calls "[divine] conversation (*mukālama*)." This is what Ibn ʿArabī calls "spiritual unveiling" (*kashf*), and it is that with which the gnostic is inspired. Next is the type of knowledge that is transmitted from the Prophet which one would only abide by if there are proofs of its authenticity and true meaning; otherwise, one would neither confirm nor deny them. The final type is that which is transmitted from those who are overtly unreligious—this is to be rejected. (Al-Jīlī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, 11–12.)

195 Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl*, 258.

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The task, consequently, is one of extrication: to disengage the Qurʾan from Ibn ʿArabī's thought and expatiate on that which he considers to be evident in order to map the path the Andalusian traverses from the Qurʾanic narrative to the frontiers of his metaphysical thought. In so doing, the way in which Ibn ʿArabī understands the Qurʾan, and how it not only informs his worldview but is the very basis of it, will be laid bare. This is the burden subsequent chapters will bear. But, lest we get ahead of ourselves, we must first prove the *Futūḥāt* echoes its shorter sibling, the *Fuṣūṣ*, in its Qurʾan-rootedness.

6.2 Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya

Prolix and comprehensive rather than terse and allusive, the *Futūḥāt* is a completely different proposition to the *Fuṣūṣ*. If there is one trait they share, however, it is that both are primarily Ibn ʿArabī's comprehension of selected passages of the Qurʾan. The central position the Qurʾan occupies in the *Futūḥāt* is something that cannot escape the watchful gaze of the discerning reader. Michel Chodkiewicz argues vehemently that Ibn ʿArabī's writings in general, and the *Futūḥāt* in particular, are nothing but commentaries of the Qurʾan.[196] Approaching the work holistically, the veracity of Chodkiewicz's assertion becomes clear, for even concepts which at first blush appear entirely exogenous may easily, on scrupulous inspection, be understood from Ibn ʿArabī's perspective as being plausible explanations of certain verses of the Qurʾan.

A paradigmatic example is the Andalusian's theory of divine emanation and its relationship to the preparedness (*istiʿdād*) of things that appear in the phenomenal world. The fundamental dichotomy with which Ibn ʿArabī grapples here is that of the infiniteness of the divine Names and the finiteness of the phenomenal world, when the latter is nothing but an expression of the former. Ibn ʿArabī states that though there is no limit to the divine outpouring which imbues everything with existence in the material realm, only certain things have the capacity to accept it, which is why sensible reality is finite.[197] Only entities which have a preparedness that allows them to have phenomenal existence, therefore, are manifestations of the Names in the sensible world. Those that do not have phenomenal existence have a form of existence which is pre-

196 Chodkiewicz makes this point throughout his work: *An Ocean Without Shore*.

197 This concept was a favorite of both mystics and poets as Chittick observes when he cites two of the most prominent proponents of each class. He writes, "As the famous ninth-century Sufi Junayd put it, 'The water takes on the color of the cup.' Rūmī asks, 'If you pour the ocean into a jug, how much will it hold?'" Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 162–163.

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phenomenal, but they too are manifestations of the Names. Thus, the Names that are represented on the sensible plane are only a portion of all the Names.

Ibn ʿArabī confronts the conundrum of why some things are given this *istiʿdād* that allows them to be while others are not:

> Preparednesses of the receptacles are among the "keys of the unseen." This is because there is naught there save absolute and all-encompassing giving (*wahab muṭlaq ʿāmm*), and outpouring of bounteousness (*fayḍ jūd*); there is nothing there, in the matter itself, which is unseen but there are no witnesses. Rather, it is information (*maʿlūmāt*) which has no limit. From this [information], there are those who have existence and those who do not, those who have causality and those who do not, those who have the aptitude to accept existence and those who do not. … Preparedness is not something that is earned. Rather, it is a divine benefaction, which is why no one knows it but God.[198]

Istiʿdād, says Ibn ʿArabī, is something which is simply bestowed by God and is a phenomenon about which man knows nothing. Going further, the mystagogue says that divine knowledge is like DNA which contains the information for existence, and is continually pouring forth from the divine—like a radio station continually broadcasting on all wavelengths (to borrow Anthony Kenny's metaphor)—but only some receptacles have the capacity to accept it by tuning into the correct one. This is *istiʿdād*.[199]

Ibn ʿArabī offers the foregoing as an extended commentary of the verses, *He sends it down in due measure as He wills*[200] and *And We do not send it down save in an appointed measure*,[201] both of which refer to the provision of sustenance. Ibn ʿArabī takes this apparent meaning of both verses and expands it to include existence, which is also bestowed according to divine benevolence and in its wisdom. Nor does it appear he strays too far from the manifest meaning as the provision of sustenance and bequeathal of existence are not entirely dissociated: the former simply continues what the latter initiates. It is also evident that whenever verses of sustenance are mentioned, Ibn ʿArabī directly trans-

198 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:359.

199 This idea appears very close to the Avicennan conception of causality and the interaction between the agent intellect and human intellects. See Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, 429.

200 Qur'an, 42:27.

201 Ibid., 15:21.

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itions to the provision of *istiʿdād* or knowledge, in other words, to "spiritual sustenance," which, in his opinion, is far closer to the true meaning of such verses.[202]

This passage is actually the resolution of a contradiction created by Ibn ʿArabī's understanding of the various verses of the Qur'an. On the one hand, he asserts that God is "overflowing with bounteousness" (*fayyāḍ bi'l-jūd*),[203] which he derives from such verses as, "*And My mercy envelops all things*,"[204] and about which he comments, "The [Divine] mercy pervades all existent things."[205] But the manner in which he identifies this mercy is unique: with the bestowal of phenomenal existence.[206] This is predicated on verses like, *He gave everything its form* (*khalq*).[207] Ibn ʿArabī understands this verse to mean God imbued everything with sensible existence.[208]

Together, these two verses, for him, mean God is All-Merciful, which is why He gives existence to everything, and there is no limit to this mercy. Still, there are verses—like the aforementioned ones—which appear to restrict God's mercy.[209] Ibn ʿArabī thus attempts to reconcile this paradox by stating that though the divine mercy is limitless, the preparedness—also bestowed by God—curtails it so that only certain entities make the leap from pre-phenomenality to sensible reality. This means God is simultaneously overflowing with mercy and restricting it to those whom He has given the preparedness to accept it.

The *Futūḥāt*, being a veritable encyclopedia of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, allows the reader to delve much deeper than the *Fuṣūṣ* into the thoughts of its author, and it is this that inspired ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 812/1408?) to write that it is:

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202 See Ibn ʿArabī's commentary of verses 4:133 and 23:18 in Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:107.

203 Izutsu, *Sufism*, 116.

204 Qur'an, 7:156.

205 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:239.

206 For an insightful piece on how Ibn ʿArabī subverts the conventional notion of mercy and perpetuates an entirely new type of mercy couched in traditional nomenclature, see Nettler, "Ibn ʿArabī's Notion of Allah's Mercy." See also Gustav Stern, *Meaning and Change of Meaning*, 163, where Stern defines a change of meaning as "the habitual modification … of the traditional semantic range of the word (1) to denote one or more referents which it has not previously denoted, or (2) to express a novel manner of apprehending one or more of its referents." It seems that Ibn ʿArabī's change in the meaning of "mercy" (*raḥma*) satisfies both of Stern's criteria.

207 Qur'an, 20:50.

208 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:239.

209 On the two types of God's mercy (or love), see also Ibn ʿArabī's *Al-Ḥubb wa'l-maḥabba al-ilāhiyya* and *raḥma min al-Raḥmān*, 5–6.

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> The greatest book written in this field in terms of benefit, with the greatest number of arcane and abstruse terms, and it is the loftiest in extensiveness and comprehensiveness. He [Ibn ʿArabī] spoke in it in many tongues.[210]

These passages exemplify how the tapestry of Ibn ʿArabī's thoughts are woven into the Qur'anic text. Addressing this issue, Abū Zayd writes,

> The truth is that scarcely a page from the works of Ibn ʿArabī are free from presenting a verse, or a collection of verses, from the Qur'an in order to corroborate, explain or resolve [an issue].[211]

If al-Qāshānī breaks away in his enunciation of the nature of the relationship between God and Man, at least in the provenance of mystical insights being the Qur'an and canonical texts of Ḥadīth, he remains dutiful to his master. This is as apparent in his lexicons as it is in the *Ta'wīlāt*, and it is to the lexicons that we now turn.

6.3 *The Lexicons*

With three increasingly complex and detailed Sufi dictionaries under his belt, al-Qāshānī is justly hailed as a major formalizer of Sufi terminology. Defense by education and anticipative recruitment seems to be the order of the day. The works are far more term-centered than those of his predecessor, and al-Qāshānī is patently more self-conscious of nomenclature. If this makes him a good commentator of Ibn ʿArabī, it makes him an even better educator and promulgator of his teachings. The most well-known and widely disseminated of his lexicons, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, is up first.

6.3.1 *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*

The most concise and most popular of his dictionaries, al-Qāshānī mentions his impetus for writing the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* in his prolegomenon:

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210 Al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ mushkilāt al-futūḥāt*, 60. Abū Zayd concurs with this assessment, remarking, "The truth is that the *Futūḥāt* … contains almost every branch of Islamic culture [and] explains it in many ambiguous ways. [This is something] we perceive in the books of Ibn ʿArabī." (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā takallama Ibn ʿArabī*, 136.) ʿAfīfī comments that the *Futūḥāt* is the key to understanding the *Fuṣūṣ* as there is more candour than periphrasis in it, and concepts are actually explained in depth. (Ibid.)

211 Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta'wīl*, 257.

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> When I finished my rough draft (*taswīd*) of a commentary of *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* and what was said in it,[212] and [what was said in my] commentary of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*, based on Sufi technical terms (*al-iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*), the scholars of transmitted [i.e. Qur'an and Ḥadīth] and intellectual knowledge (*ahl al-ʿulūm al-manqūla wa'l-maʿqūla*) did not know them [i.e. the terms], nor were they well-known (*tashtahir*) among them.[213] So they asked me to explicate them for them. … I thus busied myself (*taṣaddaytu*) in complying with their request.[214]

Since the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* is referred to by its author as a supplement to the *Ta'wīlāt* (as well as *Manāzil* and *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ*), its importance for our purpose in understanding al-Qāshānī's terminology in the context of the *Ta'wīlāt* can hardly be overstated. In this work, the mystic expounds a little on Ibn ʿArabī's definitions—if one is mentioned by Ibn ʿArabī in his own *Iṣṭilāḥāt*[215]—followed by verses from the Qur'an, Ḥadīths or snippets of Arabic poetry to bolster his definition.[216]

That al-Qāshānī understands the terms in the Qur'anic perspective, and his attention never veers too far from this, is amply exhibited by his persistent recourse to the Qur'an in his explanations.[217] Beyond common literary

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212 Al-Qāshānī's commentary of this work also displays his propensity to defend Sufi concepts and ideas against attacks by exoteric scholars. In this specific case, al-Qāshānī defends ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Harawī al-Anṣārī's (d. 481/1089) notion of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) against a contemporary, Ibn Taymiyya, who berates it in his work on this topic. (See Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 102.)

213 This binary distinction between the so-called intellectual (*maʿqūla*) and transmitted (*manqūla*) sciences is most famously documented by Abū Zayd ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) in his renowned *Muqaddima*, where he writes, "Know that the sciences (*ʿulūm*) which human beings study, and which are circulated in cities by learning or teaching, are of two types: a kind which is innate (*ṭabīʿī*) to man, to which he is guided by his thought; and a transmitted (*naqlī*) type, which he takes from him who compiles it. The first are the rationalistic [and] philosophical sciences, which it is possible for man to be acquainted with by his innate reason. … The second are transmitted, compiled sciences, which are all dependent on the reports of the Religious Establisher (*al-Wāḍiʿ al-sharʿī*)." (See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 435.)

214 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 21.

215 Ibn ʿArabī, *Rasā'il Ibn ʿArabī*.

216 ʿAlī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 728.

217 Seyyed Hossein Nasr notes that "The very reality of the Qur'an, and the revelation which made it accessible to a human community, had to be central to the concerns of anyone who sought to philosophize in the Islamic world and led to a type of philosophy in which a revealed book is accepted as the supreme source of knowledge not only of religious law but of the very nature of existence and beyond existence of the very source of existence." (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Qur'an and Ḥadīth as a Source of Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy," 28.) We see, in the commentary of al-Qāshānī, proof of this assertion.

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etiquette, abundant scriptural quotations are *sine qua non* for legitimacy and acceptability for many Muslim (and indeed Christian and Jewish) authors. But more than volume, it is the manner in which al-Qāshānī (and Ibn ʿArabī) deploy these verses that displays their Qurʾan-rootedness. For both these mystics use the Qurʾan as the basis of their mystical outlook and their citations are not merely incidental or enumerative. If this is clear in the works of Ibn ʿArabī, the distinction is yet more lucid in those of al-Qāshānī, especially his *Taʾwīlāt* in which al-Qāshānī's mystical outlook is subordinated to the scriptural text. Indeed, a mystical commentary of the Qurʾan penned by a resolute adherent and defender of Ibn ʿArabī is itself testament to the pervasive influence of the Qurʾan in the Andalusian's works.

Returning to the lexicon at hand, a suitable example of al-Qāshānī's significant reliance on the Qurʾan in this work is the entry on "the Greatest Name" (*al-ism al-aʿẓam*), about which he writes,

> According to us, it is the name of the Divine Essence in terms of what it simply is, that is, the Absolute (*al-Muṭlaqa*), the True (*al-Ṣādiqa*), whether it occurs with all of them [i.e. the Names], like when He, be He Exalted, says, *To God belong all the Beautiful Names*,[218] or some of them, like when He, be He Exalted, says, *And God is the Forgiving, the Merciful*,[219] or with none of them, like when He, be He Exalted, says, *Say! He is God, the One*.[220]

Each assertion is here not just corroborated by al-Qāshānī with a verse from the Qurʾan, the verse is the foundation of the assertion. It is the verses that inform and forge the definition, not a preformulated definition into which the verses are shoehorned.

Al-Qāshānī has compiled the first part of the work alphabetically and the second part according to subject (*mawḍūʿī*), as stated in his preface.[221] The general format and approach of his next lexicon, *Rashḥ al-zulāl*, follows its shorter sibling.

6.3.2 *Rashḥ al-Zulāl*

The middle child, both in chronology and length, is *Rashḥ al-zulāl fī sharḥ al-alfāẓ al-mutadāwila bayna arbāb al-adhwāq waʾl-aḥwāl*.[222] This work does not

218 Qurʾan, 7:180.
219 Ibid., 4:96.
220 Ibid., 112:1; al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāhāt*, 30.
221 Ibid., 21.
222 The authorship of this work has been questioned by Pablo Beneito. (See Beneito, *An*

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differ from its forerunner in approach, but is "more comprehensive and has some definitions which the other does not. The converse, however, is also true. So it turns out that both books have one purpose, with one completing the other and neither being independent (*yastaghnī*) of the other."[223] Al-Qāshānī's reason for compiling this second lexicon may be gleaned from the following statement found in his prologue: "I have responded to you, O persistent petitioner (*al-sā'il al-laḥūḥ*)! And have presented you, in keeping with your particular nature (*takhṣīṣ*), this privileged [knowledge] (*masmūḥ*)."[224] So there was a need—either expressed by people or in al-Qāshānī's own judgement—for more terms to be explained and for more detail to be given on some terms that were already explained. This work caulks these lexical cracks.[225]

The scope of *Rashḥ al-zulāl* is larger than that of its precursor. Whereas the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* is an addendum to three specific works, this book is meant to be used in conjunction with all of Ibn ʿArabī's writings. His *modus operandi* in this work is to "mention a line or two from what Ibn ʿArabī says at the beginning of the definition [and] then [to] complete the rest himself until it reaches a page or two or more!"[226] The *Rashḥ* is configured conceptually (*tartīb mafhūmī*), such that all correlated terms are listed together.[227] Greater in scope, varying in detail, the chief emphasis in this work, nevertheless, remains the Qur'an, as attested by it forming the basis of definitions. Quantitively—though this alone is no proof—there are almost twice as many verses as there are Ḥadīth, with Arabic poetry coming a very distant third.[228] Viewed by al-Qāshānī as correspondence *par excellence* between God and His most perfect creation, the preponderance of Qur'anic citations is hardly surprising. Under the entry of "the correspondence" (*al-musāmara*), al-Qāshānī explicates the profundity of this interaction:

Unknown Akbarian of the Thirteenth-Fourteenth Century: Ibn Ṭāhir, the Author of Laṭā'if al-A'lām, and his Works, 37–39.) Beneito concedes that the format of *Rashḥ* "rigorously follows" that of the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* and that it simply provides more detail than its predecessor, yet he seems unwilling to accept that the author could be al-Qāshānī. (Ibid., 37) His reluctance is largely predicated on his objection of al-Qāshānī as the author of the *Laṭā'if*. (Ibid.) Please see section on the *Laṭā'if* for a detailed engagement with this issue.

223 ʿAlī al-Qāsimī, "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 730.

224 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl*, 34.

225 I have been unable to identify whether the "persistent petitioner" is one of al-Qāshānī's students or companions, or whether he is simply employing a standard topos.

226 ʿAlī al-Qāsimī, "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 731.

227 Ibid., 730.

228 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl*, 161–166.

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> [It is] the Truth speaking with the gnostics from the realm of secrets and concealment (*ʿālam al-asrār waʾl-ghuyūb*). The Exalted said, *The Trustworthy Spirit* (*al-Rūḥ al-amīn*) *has brought it down upon your heart*,[229] for it is, in reality, the Truth speaking to you behind the veil of the Trustworthy Spirit, the Cosmos and whatever is in it.[230]

Allusively, al-Qāshānī, in conjunction with many mystics, affirms that though the revelation received by Muḥammad was the last formal revelation given to a prophet, it does not preclude the possibility of an informal, personal revelation bestowed upon the elect gnostics. This is their spiritual unveiling (*kashf*),[231] and it is of this that the Qurʾan is the most powerful and perfect model. Gershom Scholem eloquently elucidates this concept:

> Revelation, for instance, is to the mystic not only a definite historical occurrence which, at a given moment in history, puts an end to any further direct relation between mankind and God. With no thought of denying Revelation as a fact of history, the mystic still conceives the source of religious knowledge and experience which bursts forth from his own heart as being of equal importance for the conception of religious truth. In other words, instead of the one act of Revelation, there is a constant repetition of this act. This new Revelation, to himself or to his spiritual master, the mystic tries to link up with the sacred texts of the old; hence the new interpretation given to the canonical texts and sacred books of the great religions.[232]

It is little wonder, then, that al-Qāshānī relies so profoundly on the Qurʾan, for the Qurʾan is nothing but the *kashf* of the Prophet, and the *kashf* of all the gnostics who follow in his wake must be congruent with it. In explaining Ibn ʿArabī's terms with the aid of Qurʾanic references, al-Qāshānī implicitly acknowledges this. In creating his own intuitive commentary, he explicitly expresses it.

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229 Qurʾan, 26:193–194.

230 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl*, 105–106.

231 The concept of spiritual unveiling, or a powerful, immediate intuition, has analogues in the philosophical tradition, most strikingly in the epistemology of Spinoza who regards intuitive knowledge as the highest form of knowledge because it seizes the true essences of things. See Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, 606.

232 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 28.

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As the big brother of the lexicons, *Laṭā'if al-iʿlām* goes deeper and further than his more reticent brethren. It is the last lexicon written by al-Qāshānī, and it is the one where the Persian Sufi most conspicuously emerges from the shade of his master.

6.3.3 *Laṭā'if al-Iʿlām*

Not only the final lexicon, *Laṭā'if al-iʿlām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām* is also the final work al-Qāshānī authored in his life.[233] Reverentially, the title is adopted from

233 ʿAlī al-Qāsimī, "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 733. As indicated in previous sections, Beneito contests the attribution of this work to al-Qāshānī. Since determination of the provenance of many works during this notoriously neglected period can be fraught with difficulties, my approach is to make a judgement on the balance of evidence that, due to the probabilistic nature of the material, still leaves room for the possibility of the converse of my conclusion being true. As this is the case, one cannot discount the possibility—however remote—that the author of the *Laṭā'if* (and indeed *Rashḥ*) is Ibn Ṭāhir, as Beneito believes. If that does turn out to be the case (and far more evidence would have to be adduced for me to be convinced of this for the reasons I will share presently), it still would not negate the general assertions I make in this study. Indeed, given that these two works play a relatively minor and entirely supportive role to the *Taʾwīlāt*, I would argue that their insertion—as an aperture into the Akbarian mindset—would still be justified, even if it did transpire that Ibn Ṭāhir was the author. Disclaimers and general remarks out of the way, let me proceed to the principal arguments and counter arguments in this case. But before I do that, one last comment: my difference of opinion in no way derogates from the enviable archival work Beneito has done, my issue is with his conclusions, not his research.

Of the three manuscript copies of the *Laṭā'if* consulted by its first editor, Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, two had the names of al-Qāshānī and one was anonymous—a fact Beneito acknowledges. (Beneito, "Three Other Works by the Sufi Author of *Laṭā'if al-Iʿlām* Kept at the Sulemaniyye Library in Istanbul," 1055.) Beneito argues, successfully, that these manuscripts are based on a rather late copy (Ibid.), but comprehension of the subject matter and mode of expression seem to be al-Qāshānī's. In fact, Beneito writes, "it is true the style of the treatise is not very different from Qāshānī's and indeed, it bears a certain resemblance to his *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*." (Beneito, *An Unknown Akbarian*, 5.) His disinclination to accept this work as that of al-Qāshānī seems not to be predicated on mastery or delivery of the subject matter, but rather on some anomalies he detects in the text. Let us take these one-by-one.

Al-Qāshānī refers to al-Simnānī, an outspoken critic of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, as "our shaykh," which Beneito finds unacceptable as they occupied positions on opposite sides of the debate. (Beneito, *An Unknown Akbarian*, 6; Beneito, "Three Other Works," 1059.) Yet al-Qāshānī was known for his deference, even towards his most fierce opponents. (Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasā'il*, 99.) Moreover, Beneito correctly notes that viewing differences of opinion in such matters, and the exchanges that resulted, as markers of an adversarial relationship is an "exaggeration." (Beneito, *An Unknown Akbarian*, 46.) It would be more proper, he advises, to regard them as "a rich critical dialogue based on mutual respect"—a dialogue in which "polite terms" were *de rigueur*. (Ibid., 46.) Beneito goes further, claiming that the exchanges between al-Qāshānī and al-Simnānī were between men connected

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one of Ibn ʿArabī's treatises, but this work in many ways transcends Ibn ʿArabī since "it does not draw (*yastaqī*) its material from any specific works, as is the case of the first one [*Iṣṭilāḥāt*]; nor does it derive (*yastamiddu*) its technical terms from any specific Sufis, as is the case with the second dictionary [*Rashḥ*]; rather, it includes all the technical terms which the prominent Sufis use in their various works."[234] Such is the vastness of mystical erudition on display that Ḥājī Khalīfa classifies it as "unparalleled" (*lā naẓīr lahū*) in *Kashf al-ẓunūn*.[235] In corroboration, ʿAlī al-Qāsimī writes that this work is more than just definitions of technical terms, it is "an encyclopedic lexicon (*muʿjam mawsūʿī*) of Islamic Sufism."[236]

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by two bonds. He writes, "I believe it would be more correct to speak simply of a debate between close co-religionists who follow similar practices and are doubly related, by Islam and by their Sufi methods and traditions." (Ibid.) In fact, "our shaykh" seems to be one of the more sober honorifics conferred on al-Simnānī by al-Qāshānī, who also refers to him by the more grandiose titles of *Mawlānā al-aʿẓam*, *Shaykh al-Islam*, *Qudwat arbāb al-ṭarīqa*, among others, as Beneito himself concedes. (Beneito, *An Unknown Akbarian*, 8, ft. 26; Beneito, "Three Other Works," 1060, ft. 30.)

A second problem Beneito identifies is that al-Qāshānī employs the optative formula "God have mercy on him" (*raḥimah Allah*) when referring to al-Simnānī when this phrase is reserved, he contends, for those who have passed away and al-Qāshānī, as far as we know, died just before al-Simnānī. (Beneito, *An Unknown Akbarian*, 6–7; Beneito, "Three Other Works," 1060.) Not wishing to get mired in the controversy over correct dates of death or with what level of certainty we can designate a date of death for al-Qāshānī, I believe it more fruitful to consider that the optative formula to which Beneito refers is most commonly—though not exclusively—used for the deceased. Being a supplication, it may equally be applied to the living, and there are many examples recorded in the Prophetic tradition when this is the case. The Prophet, for instance, remarked, "God have mercy (*raḥim Allah*) on those who shave their heads [during pilgrimage]." (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 484.)

The third major issue that Beneito raises is that the author of the *Laṭāʾif* attributes to himself two works: *al-Durra al-farīda* and *Tadhkirat al-fawāʾid*, neither of which feature in al-Qāshānī's corpus. Beneito alleges that this alone "is sufficient to call into question who the real author of the *Laṭāʾif* is." (Beneito, *An Unknown Akbarian*, 8.) However, it is known that this period of history is among the most neglected, and the list we have of al-Qāshānī's works may well be incomplete. There seems little justification in looking for an author primarily because he has two common titles to his name even when, by Beneito's admission, the style differs somewhat from Ibn Ṭāhir's other works. (Beneito, *An Unknown Akbarian*, 43.) The extensive quotations from Sufis, the repeated references to the Qurʾan and Ḥadīth, the philosophical influences of Ibn Sīnā, as well the general diction and delivery (Ibid., 44), on the other hand, bear an uncanny resemblance to al-Qāshānī's other works.

234 Ibid., 733–734.

235 Ibid., 733.

236 Ibid., 736.

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Unparalleled and encyclopedic though it may be, al-Qāshānī's steadfast dependence on the Qur'an remains uncompromised. He even classifies the Qur'an as the path through which a believer may be admitted into the highest echelons of gnosis wherein the essential equivalency between multiplicity in God's creation and divine unity become apparent. This is

> the vision of differentiation (*tafriqa*) with the eye of unity (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*) … as this vision is the most perfect (*akmal*) of the stations (*maqāmāt*) of gnosis and of the gnostics. … This is because the vision of differentiation without the eye of unity is a state of the veiled ones (*maḥjūbīn*) from the Truth in reality, as is the case with the lay folk (*ʿawāmm*) among the unbelievers and believers. … And [as for] those from among the *awliyā'*[237] who inherit (*wārith*) their [i.e. the prophets'] station and emulate their ethical behaviour (*akhlāq*), they are the people of the Qur'an (*ahl al-Qur'ān*) … which is why it behoves them to be the medium (*wāsiṭa*) [to transmit] that which they have taken from the Truth, through [His] help (*imdād*) and outpouring (*fayḍ*), to those who are not of their rank among the creation, and this is the highest rank, though there are different levels [in this], as He, be He Exalted, said, *And surely We have preferred some prophets over others*.[238]

Al-Qāshānī is unequivocal that the Qur'an is the basis and means of true gnosis. It is the "people of the Qur'an" (*ahl al-Qur'ān*) who are the absolute receptacles of divine outpouring (*fayḍ*) and charged with its transmission to the creation. No surprise, then, that the mystic leans so heavily upon it in his definitions.[239]

This work seems to represent the culmination of al-Qāshānī's Sufi training course; it is the most comprehensive and complex of his lexicons and requires the student of mysticism to have graduated from the previous two works. But it is also the most rigorous in defense of Sufism, as a whole, and Ibn ʿArabī, in particular. Consonant with its predecessors, the author's prefatory remarks elucidate his motivation for compiling it:

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237 This term has many denotations: (1) the friend of God, (2) the constant obeyer of God, (3) the favorite of God, (4) the object of the constant beneficence and favors of God. (Lane, *Arabic Lexicon*, 8:3060.) Al-Qāshānī includes in his usage all these meanings. It is for this reason that I choose not to translate it, as a term such as "saint" (oft used as a translation of *walī*) does not incorporate all the meanings here listed.

238 Qur'an, 17:55; al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if al-iʿlām*, 2:580–582.

239 Note that in his definition of *al-Qur'ān* alone he cites six different verses of the Qur'an. See al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 2:580–582.

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> When I saw numerous exoteric[240] scholars (*ʿulamāʾ al-rusūm*) opposing them [i.e. the Sufis or esoteric scholars] on multiple occasions as they did not comprehend our books, or books of those other than us [i.e. of other orders, *ṭarīqas*], in terms of the points (*nukat*) and secrets (*asrār*) alluded to by the gnostics of God from among the great sheikhs of Sufism; the inheritors (*wārithīn*) of the knowledge of the Reality (*ʿilm al-ḥaqīqa*) and gnoses of the sacred secret (*maʿārif al-khufya al-qudsiyya*), those who combined the comprehensive speech of wisdom (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim al-ḥikmiyya*) and divine secrets (*al-asrār al-ilāhiyya*); I wanted to compose this book which contains an exposition of that which is important among their technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*), words (*alfāẓ*) and titles (*alqāb*), and which go hand-in-hand with them, and interpret that which is passed among them of divine knowledge and secrets (*al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya wa-asrārihā al-rabbāniyya*).[241]

Not content with mere explication, al-Qāshānī claims that the *Laṭāʾif* proves the essential orthodoxy of Sufi terms, and is a defense against an exoteric scholastic onslaught.

The arrangement of this work also contrasts with that of its foregoers as it follows a strictly alphabetical format.[242] By al-Qāshānī's own admission, *Laṭāʾif* is about more than just Ibn ʿArabī's Sufi terminology; the terms analyzed will, nonetheless, still be looked at in relation to Ibn ʿArabī as al-Qāshānī derives much of his mystical insight from the Andalusian's works.

Al-Qāshānī, then, in all his lexicons is unerringly dependent on the Qurʾan, Ḥadīth and poetry (in that order); his style is scientific and clinical, all of which reduces the "shock factor" of Ibn ʿArabī's thought. Suddenly, ideas that seemed unorthodox in the obscurity of nuance and density seem conventional and sober in the warm embrace of familiarity, a familiarity not only in expression, but also in format. While this staunch dependence on the Qurʾan and Ḥadīth may imbue al-Qāshānī's works with an apologetic hue, it is one borne out of a conviction that these texts are the fundamental source of gnosis. Even though both mystics hold to this maxim, it is more discernible in al-Qāshānī's works only because he has chosen to spotlight it more.

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240 On the difference between "exoteric" and "esoteric" forms of knowledge and what exactly they denote, see Paul J. Bagley, "On the Practice of Esotericism." On how these forms are employed and affect the works of Ibn ʿArabī, see Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, 123–125.

241 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 1:13–14.

242 ʿAlī al-Qāsimī, "ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 734.

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If the compilation of three progressively elaborate dictionaries with varying formats that were to become standard layouts of lexicography[243] was not enough to cement al-Qāshānī's standing as a peerless Sufi etymologist, we find large sections of his other works devoted to Sufi terms. The most notable of these is *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān fī khaṣā'iṣ al-fityān*.[244] He is thus justly lauded as being "one of the great linguists and lexicographers,"[245] whose passion for nomenclature permeates the entire corpus of his scholarly output. Despite this, however, his reputation in the West remains chiefly as an expositor of Ibn ʿArabī due to the incontestable significance of this illustrious Sufi master in whose imperious shadow al-Qāshānī resides. The fact that *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān* is still marketed as *Tafsīr Ibn ʿArabī*, though it has been proven al-Qāshānī authored it, bears ample testimony to this.[246] It is this much-misattributed commentary that constitutes the exegetical province in which we most fully explore al-Qāshānī's conception of the God-Man relationship through the term *huwiyya*.

6.3.4 *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*

As simply the only extant exegetical work of a mystical nature, the selection of the *Ta'wīlāt* from the works of al-Qāshānī is as axiomatic as it is ineluctable. It also conforms to the widely accepted *tafsīr* formulation of a verse-by-verse commentary from the beginning of the Qur'an to the end, a work that subordinates itself to the text of the Qur'an and explains it. Given that al-Qāshānī's stated objective in many of his works is to defend Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine[247]—something that is apparent in his letter to al-Simnānī in which he champions the doctrine of "oneness of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*)[248]—a Qur'anic commentary would seem the ideal format to display the essential orthodoxy and Qur'an-rootedness of his Sufi master and deflect any accusations of heresy from exotericists. The *Ta'wīlāt* thus assumes the role of a dual commentary: a commentary of the Qur'an primarily, and then a commentary of Ibn ʿArabī's thought. This study investigates the interplay between both of these functions, and the relationship of the *Ta'wīlāt* with al-Qāshānī's lexicons, which are more overt commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī's thought.

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243 Ibid.

244 See al-Qāshānī, *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān*, 114–217.

245 ʿAlī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 719.

246 See note above.

247 See above.

248 See Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, 306–312; Hermann Landolt, "Simnānī on *waḥdat al-wujūd*;" Landolt, "Der briefwechsel zwischen Kāshānī and Simnānī über waḥdat al-wuǧūd," 29–81.

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Al-Qāshānī's *tafsīr* and technical terminology will be analyzed, showing how he mediates the content of the Qurʾan through Sufi nomenclature, while acknowledging that it is deeply intertwined with Ibn ʿArabī's semantic framework. The Qurʾan, as with Ibn ʿArabī in the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt*, remains central throughout this endeavor. Al-Qāshānī draws his language from the Qurʾan while complementing it with Sufi terminology, not only to expose the essential compatibility of both, but to accentuate that the mystical explanation proffered is very much subsidiary and has no designs on intruding upon the Qurʾanic narrative.

The account of the ascension of ʿĪsā in chapter three of the Qurʾan lucidly showcases al-Qāshānī's subservience to the text of the Qurʾan. According to the Qurʾanic narrative, God discloses to ʿĪsā His plans to save him from the machinations of his enemies, and reveals what the consequences will be for those who refuse to believe. The verses run,

> *O ʿĪsā! Surely I will take you and raise you unto Me, and purify you of those who do not believe until the Day of Resurrection. … As for those who do not believe, I shall punish them with a terrible chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and they will not have anyone to help them.*[249]

Al-Qāshānī commentates,

> The corporeal form of he who [attempted to] assassinate ʿĪsā, which was the manifestation of ʿĪsā, the spirit of God, upon him be peace, was made to resemble the actual form of ʿĪsā, so they thought he was ʿĪsā and slew him and crucified him, while God caused ʿĪsā, upon him be peace, to ascend (*rafaʿa*) to the fourth heaven[250] so that his spirit would receive the outpouring from the spirituality of the Sun.[251] And they did not know, due

249 Qurʾan, 3:55–56.

250 This may be a reference to the ascension of Muḥammad during which he met with various prophets in the seven heavens. Generally, the meeting with ʿĪsā and Yaḥyā (John) is deemed to be on the second heaven with the meeting with Idrīs (Enoch) being on the fourth, though there is some discrepancy as to who was on which heaven. (Al-Bukhārī, 59:6; Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yaḥyā ibn Manda, *Al-Īmān li-ʾbn Manda*, 2:707.) Nevertheless, I have been unable to locate any tradition that places ʿĪsā on the fourth heaven. It may, therefore, be an allusion to Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology (see below).

251 In Ibn ʿArabī's cosmological conception of the universe, the Sun is placed on the fourth heaven, it is the center of the universe with three heavens on either side of it. For a detailed engagement with this issue, as well as a diagrammatical representation, see Titus Burkhardt, *Mystical Astrology according to Ibn ʿArabī*, 13. See also: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An*

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> to their ignorance, that the spirit of God cannot be killed. So when he [i.e. ʿĪsā] became certain of his fate just before the ascension (*rafʿ*), he said to his companions, "I am going to my and your heavenly Father,"[252] meaning, "I am purifying (*uṭahhiru*) myself of the realm of filth (*ʿālam al-rijs*) and joining the Holy Spirit bestowing forms, the Outpourer (*Mufīḍ*) of souls and perfection, the One worshipped by people through spiritual inspiration, and I will aid you from His outpouring."[253]

Far from being the star of the show, al-Qāshānī's commentary merely seeks to explicate the verses with the benefit of mystical insight. His subservience to the Qurʾanic text is underscored by his fastidious attention to the language of it, which he emulates. This proclivity manifests itself through his rigid conformance to the two central concepts in the above verses: the ascension (*rafʿ*) of ʿĪsā and the cause of it, which was his purification (*taṭhīr*) from those who did not believe.

Al-Qāshānī maintains the terms as they are in the Qurʾan and only furnishes the reader with the backdrop to the ascension. His narrative, in other words, simply augments the text of the Qurʾan. Nor is his *tafsīr* a labored mystical reading of the Qurʾan, as is patently perceptible from his commentary of the following verse of chapter 45, in which the argument of Muḥammad's enemies is confuted. Those who repudiated the final Messenger's call asserted that there was nothing beyond the life of the world. The Qurʾan repeats their logic in order to refute it:

> *And they say*, "*There is naught save our life of the world*," that is, sensible [existence], *we die*, by a natural, physical death, "*and we live*," the physical, sensory life, there being no death or life besides them. And they do not attribute this [death] except to time due to their being veiled[254] from

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Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, which is an indispensable guide to Islamic cosmology in general.

252 Interestingly, a contemporary of al-Qāshānī, Niẓām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Nīsābūrī (d. 728/1328?), also attributes an almost identical quote to ʿĪsā: "I am going to my and your Father." (Al-Nīsābūrī, *Gharāʾib al-Qurʾān*, 2:570.) The early Ḥanafī scholar, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/980?), mentions in his commentary that this statement of ʿĪsā is in the Old Testament (*Injīl*). (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 2:295, 4:41.)

253 Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr Ibn ʿArabī*, 1:92.

254 Al-Qāshānī does not use this term in the mystical sense here. The people to whom he refers attribute death to visible factors without acknowledging the true agent: God. They are thus veiled from the truth, which is unseen, through their stubborn insistence on the apparent alone. This citation shows how al-Qāshānī's commentary is not overtly mystical,

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> the true Executor, the One who seizes souls, the Outpourer (*Mufīḍ*) of life upon bodies.[255]

The blatant exotericism of this commentary cannot escape the attention of the keen reader. Indeed, this passage would not seem out of place in the orthodox commentaries of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) or al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273).[256] Al-Qāshānī thus does not feel the need to ascribe an esoteric meaning to every verse of the Qur'an.[257] It is only when mystical insight (*baṣīra*) endows particulars which a literal reading glosses over that he engages in such a commentary. The mystical aspect, then, is something which, for him, emanates organically from the text, but where such a meaning may be coupled with his Sufi outlook, al-Qāshānī is quick to avail himself of the opportunity.[258]

The exoteric interpretation, then, resides cheek by jowl with the esoteric one,[259] but the construction is within the larger framework of al-Qāshānī's pedagogical commitment, a commitment that conforms to the preparedness of the reader.[260] Indeed, al-Qāshānī fashions his commentary in layers that are uncovered by the spiritual discernment of the mystical wayfarer, and this bespoke pedagogical imperative is nowhere better displayed than in his commentary of chapter 12. Al-Qāshānī affirms that the reason the story of Yūsuf is "the best of stories" (*aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ*)[261] is:

> because its expression (*lafẓ*) and structure (*tarkīb*) are inimitable; its apparent meaning corresponds to reality and its esoteric meaning indicates the form of wayfaring (*sulūk*) and is an exposition of the state of the wayfarer, just like other stories created for that purpose but [this one] corresponds (*ṭibāq*) and conforms (*wifāq*) more than them.[262]

The various intentions of al-Qāshānī and the role each plays in the hierarchy of his commentary is here transparently articulated. Al-Qāshānī explains that the superiority of the story of Yūsuf is due to its:

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not that it is not mystical. It must be remembered that al-Qāshānī had no intention of the *Ta'wīlāt* being an exoteric commentary as this aim he achieved with his *Ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl*.

255 Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr Ibn ʿArabī*, 2:547.

256 Notwithstanding the reference to God as the Outpourer of life.

257 He himself declares this in his introduction to the work. See conclusion for details.

258 Lory, *Les commentaires*, 40, 158.

259 Ibid., 40, 157–158.

260 Ibid., 29.

261 Qur'an, 12:3.

262 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:262.

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– Language—this includes the lexical expressions and the structural composition;
– Exoteric meaning, which takes the form of a straightforward narrative;
– Esoteric meaning, which betrays mystical truths of the spiritual path, in accordance with the spiritual state (*ḥāl*) of the wayfarer.

Other narratives perform these functions also, but none, says al-Qāshānī, that "correspond" and "conform" to the spiritual state of the wayfarer as closely as this one.

In his exegesis of the next couple of verses (12:4 and 12:5), al-Qashānī again shows that though the verses have a profound metaphysical importance and he is keen to analyze that aspect, they, nevertheless, are also basic statements of fact. Yet his most detailed allegorical departure begins with 12:7 in which Yūsuf assumes the role of the heart; Yaʿqūb, the role of the intellect; and the eleven brothers, the roles of the five external senses and the five internal senses, and an additional sense of anger and lust, both of which are subsumed under one sense.

The eleven senses (brothers), in this allegorical retelling, envy the heart (Yūsuf) because they desire the intellect (Yaʿqūb) to actualize their corporeal pleasures but the intellect inclines towards the heart, which bids it to actualize noble traits.[263] The battle lines thus drawn, the entire narrative becomes a story of the triumph of the noble heart over its base inclinations—a story, indeed, of actualizing the latent potential of one's preparedness. And lest the relevance of the entire story to this individual objective be lost on the reader, al-Qāshānī is as eager to end the chapter with this point as he was to begin with it. And since he began with the significance of the state of the wayfarer, he ends with:

> *Have they not travelled in* the land of their preparedness (*istiʿdād*), *so that they see how the* matter ended *for those who came before them*, and [what] the end of their perfection [was], such that they may attain the pinnacle of their initiative and achieve their perfection, in accordance with their preparedness. Surely, everyone has an individuality (*khāṣṣiyya*), and an individual preparedness that necessitates a particular felicity, which is his [final] outcome (*ʿāqiba*).[264]

Unabashedly showing his hand, al-Qāshānī claims the story of Yūsuf galvanizes us to actualize the pinnacle of our individual preparedness against the machinations of our concupiscent self.

263 Ibid., 262–263.
264 Ibid., 279.

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The task of the wayfarer thus defined, al-Qāshānī proceeds to delineate his own role in the process:

> *Surely there is in their stories wisdom*, meaning, that by which they can cross over (*yaʿbar*) from their apparent meaning to their esoteric meaning, just as we crossed over in the story of Yūsuf.[265]

A solitary crossing it may be, but al-Qāshānī does not leave the wayfarer unaccompanied. He is there at the crossing, showing the way, joining dots, holding hands. How much we see depends on our preparedness, and how much we have actualized its potential.

The manner in which al-Qāshānī's pedagogical predilection appears in the context of *huwiyya* will be explored, as will how he negotiates the winding byways of the Qurʾan with it. Additionally, the similarities and differences of this term with Ibn ʿArabī's usage will be examined, as contextualizing it in Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysical outlook is unavoidable. It will be shown, also, if *huwiyya* assumes a categorically theocentric hue as it does in Ibn ʿArabī's writings. For if every existent thing in the phenomenal and pre-phenomenal realms is a manifestation of the Divine Attributes, then all terms ascribed to them will necessarily need to refer back to God. Language itself, therefore, in Ibn ʿArabī's worldview, is merely an allusion to, and an articulation of, His ubiquity in every plane of existence. This is why *huwiyya*, which is particularly expressive of the non-manifest aspect of God, has been chosen for this study, as it is the most efficient way of pinning down what can be a very convoluted and nebulous theological outlook.

Before embarking on a synchronic scrutiny of *huwiyya* in the works of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī, it may be beneficial to know, deplorably briefly though it may be, the diachronic backstory of the term, that we may better understand how our two protagonists deploy and distort the term for their own expository ends.

7 The History

"But words are things," urges Byron, "and a small drop of ink,/Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces/That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think." It may make millions think, but it would be folly to suppose the millions

265 Ibid.

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were of the same epoch, or that it would make people of varying eras think in the same way. Equally, a word may elicit an effect alone, or may be contextually directed, or often be both, but in very different ways. The temporal aspect, following a synchronic/diachronic bifurcation, has already been mentioned. But Toshihiko Izutsu also ramifies the denotations of terms into either "basic" or "relational" meanings.[266] A hierarchy of words is further posited by the linguist with "focus-words" at the semantic summit. The worldview the Qur'an creates and perpetuates, says Izutsu, is the product of an intricate lattice of key terms, which generate linguistic microcosms with a nominal nucleus, or focus-word. These semantic fields, with the focus-word at their center and key terms orbiting them, are bound to other semantic fields by polyvalent key terms that act as connective tissue fastening these fields together to form an entire conceptual outlook. While this unitary, synchronic method frames our analysis of the lion's share of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī's works, here a historical aperçu is dimly adumbrated, for if Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī use the term in their own way, their notion is still informed by *huwiyya*'s historical dimension.

Huwiyya is an abstract noun from the pronoun *huwa* (he), and comes directly from the lexicon of Hellenistic learning. It has also been suggested that it is a loan-word based on the Syriac *hāywā*.[267] The relationship between *huwiyya* and *mawjūd*, and which should be used for the same Greek word, constituted a significant dilemma for Arabic translators of Greek philosophical texts. Indeed, Ibn Rushd's (d. 595/1198) "overwhelming interest" was "in the difference between '*mawǧūd*' or '*huwiyya*' which signifies the essence of the thing and the '*mawǧūd*' or '*huwiyya*' which signifies the true. … Should they use '*mawǧūd*,' despite its misleading paronymous form, or coin a new word and say '*huwiyya*?'"[268]

266 Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 119–178; Izutsu, *God and Man*, 19.

267 Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 219, ft. 30; Olga Lizzini, "Wuǧūd-Mawǧūd/Existence-Existent in Avicenna," 117.

268 Stephen Menn, "Fārābī in the Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics: Averroes against Avicenna on Being and Unity," 62. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, 3:8. See also Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 5–9. The aim of the present work, as stated, is not to sketch the historical evolution of the term. F.E. Peters provides a good overview of the terms that entered the Arabic language from Greek in relation to Ibn ʿArabī. See F.E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs*, 214. It is also not my purpose to scrutinize whether this term belonged to philosophy or theology (*kalām*), or whether there was even a distinction between the two disciplines in the respective eras of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī. Certainly, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) stated that "by his time, works on *Kalām* and works on *Falsafa* appeared to be no longer distinguishable." (A.I. Sabra, "*Kalām* Atomism as an Alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing *Falsafa*," 203. See also A.I. Sabra, "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam," where the significance of

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First appearing as a cameo in the works of Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī's (d. 259/873) circle,[269] there is a close association between *huwiyya* and the abstract noun *anniyya* as both are translations for the Greek terms *on* ("being") and *einai* ("to be").[270] *Huwiyya*, nonetheless, is also employed by these early translators as an antonym for "otherness."[271] Adamson suggests that *huwiyya* is most commonly used to denote *on* whereas *anniyya* is mainly reserved for *einai*.[272] Yet there are cases when the converse is also true. The interchangeability between the terms suggests that the difference between them was not sufficiently delineated.[273] Indeed, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) resolutely declares the two to be synonyms.[274]

In al-Kindī's circle, then, *huwiyya* and *anniyya* are used to refer to God, in terms of his existence, which is often presented with the ordinal adjective *al-ūlā* (the first). This means the nature of God's existence is not expressed by the term, only its priorness to everything.[275] However, there are also passages of the *Theology of Aristotle* translated by al-Kindī's circle that clearly deny that the First has being. Thus the term is also applied to that which does have being first, which is the *intellect*.[276] Adamson hypothesizes that:

> … the Adaptor[277] is trying to hold on to the idea that God *is* being, though he is prepared to admit that God does not *have* being, perhaps thinking that this would imply that God has being as something external attributed to him.[278]

In this case, *huwiyya* (and *anniyya*) is "the immediate effect and proper effect of the First, with all things being indirect effects through the mediation of the

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this circumstance is analyzed in terms of astronomy.) In this study, I will concentrate on an analysis of thought, ideas and intellectual methods, though this endeavor, naturally, cannot be entirely extricated from the historical context.

269 Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 125.

270 Ibid., 126.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid., 161. Joel Kraemer declares that the two are used simply to express "*that* he exists," there being no difference between them whatsoever. (Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, 216.)

274 Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 126.

275 Ibid., 129.

276 Ibid., 130.

277 This is most likely to be Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī, according to Adamson. (See Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 176–177.)

278 Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 130.

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intellect."[279] There are other times, though, when it refers to the unknown-ness of God. We are told that His *huwiyya* is "not perceived in any way. He is the one whose name is unknown, to say nothing of His substance."[280]

Another connotation of *anniyya* and *huwiyya* used by this early theologian/translator is that it is an articulation of God's simplicity, meaning, "His being [is] nothing other than what it is" because "if God had attributes distinct from His being, He would not be truly one."[281] Again, this is not an outright negation redolent of the hypertranscendentalism of the Muʿtazilites, for it is conceded that though God has no attributes because He is their cause, He is still connected to them in the way a cause is connected to the caused. In this sense, then, He does have attributes.[282] Also, at other times, it seems positive attributes, at least in principle, can be said to be identical to God's *huwiyya*.[283]

Al-Kindī himself further uses *huwiyya* to underscore the simplicity of God, that is to say, he equates God's being to His simplicity. This means the primary difference, according to al-Kindī, is that God's *huwiyya* does not have multiplicity; everything else, in contrast, does.[284] The term *huwiyya* thus has the following early meanings:

1. It denotes God in terms of His priorness to everything else.
2. It is a term for the first thing to have being, that is, the intellect.
3. It connotes the unknown-ness of God, who cannot be apprehended by intellects.
4. It represents the positive attributes of God that are His being insofar as He is their cause, but are not He as He is one and simple.
5. It means the simplicity and unity of God, as opposed to the multiplicity of all other things.

By al-Fārābī's time, *huwiyya* was already very much part of the philosophical lexicon, which is why the late philosopher, Ibn Rushd, is somewhat of an outlier in seeking to explain the term.[285] Al-Fārābī, without feeling the need to elucidate the term, makes an important distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya*: the former connotes conceptual essence, and the latter, an individual, exist-

279 Ibid., 141.
280 Ibid., 156.
281 Ibid., 131.
282 Ibid.
283 Ibid., 156.
284 Ibid., 183.
285 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "*Huwiyya*." The term had become such a staple of the philosophical tradition by the middle of the fourth/tenth century that its primary connotations were taken for granted by philosophers. Ibn Rushd, for the purpose of thoroughness it seems, sought to define it first before deploying it.

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ing manifestation of that essence,[286] such as man, and Fred who is *a* man. He also distinguishes between mental and extra-mental (that is, proper) existence, with *huwiyya* being employed for the latter. The only example where there is no distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya*, according to al-Fārābī, is in God. This is because every essence needs an external stimulus to bring it into existence, notwithstanding God.[287]

Huwiyya seems to be a term of extraordinary versatility. In the *Liber de Causis*, it is applied to the whole gamut of beings, from God, the first Being, to pure intelligences, to beings with sensible existence.[288] Indeed, in Ibn Rushd's commentary of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, it is "said to assume as many meanings as Aristotle has categories."[289] Moreover, according to Ibn Rushd, not only may *huwiyya* be used for substances and accidents, it may also denote both the essence of a thing, and whether it is true, that is, actual or existing. In both cases, the word is the same, but the meaning very different.[290] A.M. Goichon identifies eleven uses for *huwiyya* in *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā*,[291] the primary denotation being "a concrete being considered universally."[292] Ibn Sīnā expounds much on the distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya* initially presented by al-Fārābī,[293] and the term clearly plays a pivotal role in his philosophy. All these meanings and associations of *huwiyya* were available to Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī, and inform their own usage of the term, though one does not find in either a conscious philosophical use of it.

Indeed, Ibn ʿArabī displays little appetite for the application of unvarnished philosophical explanations and categorizations for the nature of God.[294] The absolute essence of God can never be comprehended, much less categorized. Yet we would be hasty if we assumed this was the Andalusian's last word on the matter. For God, in the manner he relates to His creation—through the Names—opens avenues for comprehension and categorization. And it is in this sphere that Ibn ʿArabī avails himself of every mode of thought and articulation in order to depict and display the nature of God and the nature of his interaction with the Cosmos.

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286 Ibid.
287 Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent*, 110.
288 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. *"Huwiyya."*
289 Ibid.
290 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
293 Lizzini, "Wuǧūd-Mawǧūd/Existence-Existent in Avicenna," 117.
294 Qaiser Shahzad, "Ibn ʿArabī's Theory of Divine Roots and the Question of God and Ten Categories," 445.

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The *huwiyya* of God, says Ibn ʿArabī, in its numinous transcendence does not admit of any of the Aristotelian categories. But shun the categories he does not because it furnishes him with an adaptable framework within which to characterize and convey the communicable nature of God—His comparability (*tashbīh*). And how this facet, though not God in His supra-rational transcendence (*tanzīh*), relates to and is realized in the phenomenal world. Denis Gril is correct, then, to adduce Ibn ʿArabī's treatment of the Aristotelian categories as an example of "the way in which a Sufi appropriates concepts that may originally be used for another purpose, for his own purposes."[295] Yet to consider that Ibn ʿArabī would acknowledge his debt to, or even *actively* appropriate and absorb the categories, and use it as his point of departure for *huwiyya* would be presumptuous. Being part of his cultural heritage, these ideas palpitated in his mind, ideas that would be resurrected in the domain of his explanation and argumentation. To conflate organic absorption and conscious assimilation would, nevertheless, constitute an error and a leap, both of which play down his originality and play up the contribution of his precursors.

Though I am unwilling to acknowledge active assimilation of Aritostle's categories, it is nonetheless undeniable that Ibn ʿArabī makes passive use of the categories to answer two fundamental questions, as Gril puts it: "What can we know about God and how did the universe come into being?"[296] In other words, what is the connection between "the Essence, the Attributes and the Acts?"[297] The problem with these questions and the reason Ibn ʿArabī never employs the categories to delineate the transcendent reality of God is that "the knowledge we can have of God is strictly contrary to that which we have of the universe."[298] This is because "the categories allow us to think about the world but not its transcendent principle."[299] The true nature of God—His *huwiyya*—thus cannot be expressed in positive terms.[300] This does not indicate that the Names of God, His Attributes, are extra-categorical, nor that they had not been subjected to categorization prior to Ibn ʿArabī. Indeed, though not overtly associated with or connected to Aristotelian categories, divine Attributes and their implications for the Cosmos had kindled the curiosity of many philosophers and theologians

295 Denis Gril, "Ibn ʿArabī et les catégories," 148.
296 Ibid., 154.
297 Ibid.
298 Ibid.
299 Ibid., 162.
300 Shahzad, "Ibn ʿArabī's Theory of Divine Roots," 446.

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in the Islamic tradition before Ibn ʿArabī entered the scene.[301] Ibn ʿArabī's contribution is not in the way he applies the categories, it is the way in which he adapts them.

Not allowing application of the categories to God in His Absoluteness and even expressing displeasure at the mere contemplation of the absolute divine Essence (but contemplating it anyway),[302] Ibn ʿArabī applies the two categories of action and affection to the divine Names. In particular, Names such as "the Avenger" (*al-Muntaqim*), "the Grateful" (*al-Shakūr*)[303] and "the One Who responds" (*al-Mujīb*) to advertize how God reacts and responds to His creation.[304] His unique contribution, however, is in establishing a "correspondence between divine nature and the form of the world."[305] Each existent in the phenomenal world, Ibn ʿArabī proclaims, has a noumenal counterpart on "the divine side."[306] The mystic thus theologizes Aristotelian categories. Furthermore, because he has installed an ontological connection between the divine Names and the cosmos, the function of the categories becomes ontological as well as theological.[307]

Huwiyya, then, is a term that sits at the intersection of the Venn diagram of Hellenistic thought, the philosophical tradition of Islam and Sufism. This study does not scrutinize the appropriation of the term from Hellenistic learning to Sufi literature,[308] nor does it analyze the evolution and various incarnations of it in the Islamic mystical tradition. It simply charts Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī's own usage of the term and what they mean by it in their principal works: the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* for Ibn ʿArabī (with a greater emphasis on the latter), and the lexicons of al-Qāshānī and his *Taʾwīlāt*. A direct comparison of the two mystics in the context of this term will then be attempted to disinter the similarities and display the differences, and to decipher what these say about the authors. As with any such study, the point of departure must be each author's own definition of the term under investigation, inasmuch as it has been defined by them, and it is from this definition that this study, too, begins.

301 Ibid., 447.
302 Ibid., 448.
303 Ibid., 450–451.
304 Ibid.; Gril, "Ibn ʿArabī et les catégories," 163.
305 Shahzad, "Ibn ʿArabī's Theory of Divine Roots," 452.
306 Ibid.
307 Ibid., 459; Gril, "Ibn ʿArabī et les catégories," 163.
308 For a study of these, see Massignon, *Passion*. See also Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy* and F.E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam*.

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CHAPTER 2

Ibn ʿArabī and *Huwiyya*

1 Ibn ʿArabī's Definition

Ibn ʿArabī is many things: he is a Sufi theorist of preposterous profundity, he is a writer of almost paranormal prolificacy, he is a master of considerable celebrity. He is all of these things; what he is not, however, is punctilious about supplying definitions, or indeed adhering to the few definitions he deigns to bequeath. Unforgivably brief—just a few pages, in contradistinction to al-Qāshānī's three entire lexicons—and with umpteen notable absentees, it is a testament to the significance of *huwiyya* that it even makes the revered ranks of Ibn ʿArabī's *Iṣṭilaḥāt* in the *Rasāʾil*.[1] More sibylline than illuminative, oracular than explicative, Ibn ʿArabī defines *huwiyya* as, "The Reality in the realm of the unseen (*ʿālam al-ghayb*)."[2] Not much to go on. But since *ʿālam al-ghayb* is nothing but preceding sensible manifestations of God, we do learn that the term is entirely theocentric.[3] *Huwiyya* thus refers to the non-manifest aspect of God. However, given that this includes many different planes of existence, as well as many different types of divine manifestation, we have here little more than a springboard.

We may be wise to heed Keats' advice and to strengthen not only our intellects as he suggests, but our understanding of God, by making up our minds about nothing, and letting our minds be a thoroughfare, not just for all thoughts, but for all possible denotations of *huwiyya*. For since Ibn ʿArabī has cast his net impossibly wide with this definition, the only way of ascertaining what he means is to seek elucidation and acumination along the concrete contours of his works. Let us go big before we go small, let us mine the elaborate alluvial soil of the *Futūḥāt* before we proceed to the laconic lands of the *Fuṣūṣ*.

1 Ibn ʿArabī, *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 529–541.

2 Ibid., 538. See also al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 295, which provides the same definition on the authority of Ibn ʿArabī.

3 This is epitomized in Suʿād al-Ḥakīm's succinct explanation of *al-huwa*: "According to Ibn ʿArabī, *al-huwa* is a term for the divine essence in terms of its being non-manifest." (Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Muʿjam al-ṣūfiyya*, 1120.)

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2 *Huwiyya* in *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*

Fabulously rich, prohibitively vast, and flitting from outright exotericism to Delphic esotericism, the *Futūḥāt* is the fullest compendium of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, and the truest expression of his worldview. So, naturally, its analysis should preponderate in this study. Yet it does not.

Wilde writes that some things are more precious because they do not last long. A corollary might be that some works are more precious because they do not take long. While acknowledging that the *Futūḥāt* details where the *Fuṣūṣ* only alludes, that it manifests where the *Fuṣūṣ* merely mentions, we fix our critical gaze more on the latter precisely *because* it is a capsule summary of Ibn ʿArabī's cardinal concepts. If this means that analysis of *huwiyya* usage in the *Fuṣūṣ* is extensive, it should not mean that investigation in the *Futūḥāt* should be entirely absent. The issuance of a disclaimer, however, is warranted on the grounds of negligence due to impotence. A comprehensive scrutiny of *huwiyya* in the *Futūḥāt* would entail thousands of lines, hundreds of passages and scores of pages of translation, yet the net effect would largely be the same. We may be tempted to cite Rousseau's political maxim that "there is no point in getting 20,000 men to do what a hundred select men can do ever better." In this work, the elective aristocracy of *Fuṣūṣ* citations represents its *Futūḥāt* constituents in the chamber of our analysis. But before we hear from the elected officials, let us—however superficially—see what the proletariat have to say.

2.1 *Creational* Huwiyya

Varied and diverse though his deployment of *huwiyya* in the *Futūḥāt* may be, Ibn ʿArabī is fastidious in underscoring that the term pertains primarily to the unseen. The mystic's conception of the nature of God furnishes a paradigmatic instance:

> As for the end of the divine Names, they are the very ones as their beginning and He is *al-huwa*, so He is as He said [of Himself], "*He is God, the One besides whom there is no god*" [*Huwa Allāh alladhī lā ilāh illā huwa*].[4] He thus began with *huwa*, then brought forth the Name *Allāh*, which encapsulates all the Names (which will come in detail), then [He followed this with] a negation. So He negated that this rank could be for anyone but Him. He subsequently affirmed this as being necessary of Himself by saying, "*besides whom*" [lit. except Him, *illā huwa*]. Thus, He began with *huwa*

4 Qur'an, 59:23.

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> and ended with *huwa*, and all the details of the essences of the divine Names are surely subsumed under the Name *Allāh*, which comes after His mentioning *huwa*. Therefore, the word *huwa* is more general than the word *Allāh* for it alludes to God and all the unseen things, and to all things which have a *huwiyya*. And there is naught there [i.e. in the realm of the unseen] save it has a *huwiyya*, irrespective of whether it is known or mentioned, existent (*mawjūd*) or non-existent (*maʿdūm*).[5]

The symmetry of the verse, *He is God, the One besides whom there is no god*, says Ibn ʿArabī, is not without meaning. With *huwa* begins the verse, and with *huwa* does it end. This imparts an underlying truth: all the Names are the same inasmuch as they convey the meaning of God. So it is that "the end of the divine Names … are the very ones as their beginning." But while they are identical in function, they are disparate in eminence. Nor does parity in telos entail equality in esteem. Ibn ʿArabī, however, takes pains to italicize the common thread that runs through all of them. He then turns his attention to the specific construction of the verse, which is a concatenation of *huwa—Allāh—huwa*.

The mystagogue asserts that the verse begins with *huwa*, which is a nondescript term for one of the Names, and as such, could be any of the Names. The Name *Allāh* is then adduced, "which encapsulates all the Names" and this is followed again by *huwa*. The dynamic may thus be deconstructed as: any Name—all the Names—any Name. But whereas the first *huwa* is an attestation, the final one is a negation. This, too, is by design; God negates "that this rank could be for anyone but Him." So to which rank does Ibn ʿArabī refer? The plain reading of the verse suggests it is the rank of divinity. And Ibn ʿArabī agrees with this, if only to a point. Because for him this reality has far more significance since everything in the Cosmos and in pre-phenomenal planes of reality are manifestations of God. It is therefore to this rank—the rank of being the source of everything, of actually *being* everything—that he alludes.

Ibn ʿArabī states that the reason *huwa* is mentioned prior to *Allāh*, a Name which encompasses all the Names, is because "*huwa* is more general than the word *Allāh* for it alludes to God and all the unseen things, and to all things which have a *huwiyya*." This means that the term *huwa* refers, as Ibn ʿArabī elaborates here, not only to any Name of God, and, as such, to all His Names, but to all the preceding sensible manifestations of God—everything that has a *huwiyya*, whereas the Name *Allāh* alludes to only the manifestations of the divine Names. But if everything is a manifestation of the Names, as Ibn ʿArabī

5 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:317.

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intimates, then why exactly is *huwa* more general that *Allāh*? Ibn ʿArabī answers this question himself when he says, "There is naught there [i.e. in the realm of the unseen] save it has a *huwiyya*, irrespective of whether it is known or mentioned, existent (*mawjūd*) or non-existent (*maʿdūm*)." Everything, therefore, whether it exists or not, has a *huwiyya*, whereas only things that exist—even if they are in preceding sensible realms—can be a locus of divine manifestation. This is why *Allāh* is more specific than *huwa*.

The passage categorically states that *huwiyya* is applicable not only to God, but also to the existents in the unseen world; their *huwiyya*, nonetheless, is only from *huwa*. This is the secret of this verse. God's *huwiyya* begets the *huwiyya* of everything, *some* of which are existent in the unseen and seen realms and therefore manifestations of His Names, and this rank befits Him alone. The final *huwa* is negative because it is an emphatic antipode of the initial assertion. In essence, it is the following that Ibn ʿArabī extracts from this verse: *Everything*, whether existent or non-existent, seen or unseen, emanates from God. This is the meaning of the first *huwa*. Existent beings, whether in the sensible or presensible realms, are manifestations of the Names of God. This is the meaning of *Allāh*. The rank of being the source of absolutely everything, whether existent or non-existent, seen or unseen, belongs only to God. This is the meaning of the second *huwa*.[6]

So everything has a *huwiyya*, which emanates from His *huwiyya*, and this in turn is a manifestation of His Names. The inextricable connection between the Names of God and His *huwiyya* is here clearly paraded. It is a connection that merits further exploration.

2.2 *The Divine Attributes*

Even though *huwiyya* refers to both the essence of God and that of the unseen existents in Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics, the latter only derive their essence from God, as stated. The true *huwiyya* thus is His *huwiyya* alone, about this Ibn ʿArabī is adamant:

> Do you not see them [i.e. people who are veiled from the truth] saying about "*kibriyā'*,"[7] "glorified," "independent," "mighty," that they are indeed

6 It is worthy of mention that Ibn ʿArabī differs markedly from al-Tahānawī who mentions that *huwa* is a Name which is more specific than *Allāh* as it is subsumed in it. Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 3:1539.

7 Ibn ʿArabī seems to be using *kibriyā'* not in its traditional meaning (i.e. pride/arrogance/magnificence), but rather to denote "the One who is praised" above all others, in other words, *alladhī yukabbar*. He thus seems to be interpreting *kibriyā'* as the verbal noun of the verb

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> attributes of transcendence? That is to say, according to them, He is above being the opposite of this? But the matter, according to the gnostics, is not as they say … He said, "*For Him is the kibriyā' in the heavens and the Earth*"[8] … that is the *huwiyya* of the Truth … for that which is in the heavens and the Earth is a locus for Him and this is naught save *kibriyā'* as He is not praised except in the Cosmos itself. And He is too majestic for the matter to be other than Him [entirely]. So He is the One from every aspect and all-knowing when it comes to what He has set up in His creation.
>
> In short, what He has composed with His knowledge and wisdom is that He made the heavens and the Earth a locus for His *kibriyā'*. It is as if He is saying, "For the One who created them [i.e. the heavens and the Earth] is *kibriyā'* in the heavens and the Earth themselves, to the point that they praise their God by it," and this is how it turned out. So they [i.e. the heavens and the Earth] praise Him through their selves and say, "*He is the owner of majesty*,"[9] that is, the possessor of the majesty which we find in ourselves for Him.[10]

Huwiyya refers to the source of all the divine attributes for Ibn ʿArabī. He mentions that the heavens and the Earth express these attributes, of which one is *kibriyā'*. This is manifested in the Cosmos, but not in the sense that the creation praises Him; rather, their actual existence itself pays tribute to and is testimony of His *kibriyā'*. It is in this way that everything is God in its entirety, for all existence is a manifestation of God, and through that manifestation, He is exalted. Consequently, it is not a dissociative exaltation, one that sequesters Him away from His creation, but an associative exaltation—one that binds Him to His creation. God's *kibriyā'* or His glory or might thus is not the way He exerts His power over His creation, as the exotericists would have us believe, it is the way in which He is expressed in it.

Ibn ʿArabī continues his analysis of this verse:

> The Truth, in terms of His Essence, cannot be described by anything by which the existence of the Cosmos is described. So majesty and *kibriyā'* are attributed to Him [in metaphorical terms as] … He did not make its locus except the heavens and the Earth. So He said, "*And to Him* [*alone*]

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kabbara (i.e. to praise). Such interpretational license is a common feature of Ibn ʿArabī's linguistic analysis.

8 Qur'an, 45:37.

9 Ibid., 55:27.

10 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:352.

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> *belong kibriyā' in the heavens and the Earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise*."[11] He did not say [this] about Himself; rather, the locus is the thing described by "*kibriyā'*," which is really for God.[12]

The remote God, who is far beyond the ken of human comprehension, says Ibn ʿArabī, cannot be defined by any terms used to describe the creation, for such a scenario postulates an elemental commonality, and on this absolute level there can be no such commonality between God and man.[13] He is even more unequivocal when he says,

> We [the gnostics] do not describe Him except by that which He describes Himself, and we do not name Him except by that which He names Himself. We do not invent a name for Him, neither do we form an opinion [about Him], nor do we establish for Him an attribute. … He does not resemble us nor do we resemble Him. There is nothing like Him in us and there is nothing like us in Him. For He is by Himself for Himself, and we are for ourselves in Him as we are not independent in our existence as He is in His Existence, except that He created the Cosmos in His form and therefore it accepts His Names. So that which is applied to the Cosmos is applied to the Truth as it is what the Truth has applied to Himself. But we should know that He is the original denotation of the Names, not us … [as] we are not worthy of them; rather, all this is for Him.[14]

The epithets used to describe God are not ones of His true, remote essence, they are ones of His Names; Names which man can comprehend; Names with which man can form a bond; Names that are manifested in the Cosmos.[15] So these

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11 Qur'an, 45:37.

12 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:351.

13 Collinson et al. remark along similar lines: "Ibn Arabi further holds that God as Essence cannot be known but that knowledge of him may be attained through knowledge of his attributes, and knowledge of his attributes is gained through certain forms of human thought. However, what is thus known is not knowledge of the attributes as they are in Reality, but only of them as they appear to the human mind: manifestations and revelations of God are shaped by or conform to the natures of their recipients." See Diané Collinson, Kathryn Plant and Robert Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, 53. (For more details on the interplay between God's essence and the preparedness of the creation, see section on *huwiyya* and preparedness below.)

14 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:351.

15 It is this point that has confused many modern commentators on Ibn ʿArabī. Qaiser Shahzad, for instance, writes, "Ibn ʿArabi adopted the Muʿtazilite stance that attributes are identical with the divine essence [since] there is nothing in existence but His names."

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attributes are attributes of the manifestations of the Names in the sensible world. *Kibriyā'*, which is actually an epithet of a Name, is used for the Cosmos as it is a locus for manifestation of His attributes. This does not mean that the Cosmos itself has *kibriyā'*, as it is only expressing the *kibriyā'* of the divine Names; nevertheless, due to its apparent manifestation of God's *kibriyā'*, it is afforded this adjective.

Ibn ʿArabī contends that the reason God made the existence of all creation a manifestation of His Names is because the fundamental telos for the Cosmos and everything in it is that He may be known. Now, since the greatest indication that may possibly be given to a created entity of the existence of God is existence of itself, God made our very existence a locus for His Names.[16] He writes,

> God did not … leave any of the attributes in the Cosmos with us except in order to describe for us, through them, our creator, so that it would be clear to us that since all these are His attributes and not ours, the attributes of the Cosmos are, in reality, *huwiyya* of the Truth and the different emanations to bring forth contingent things … so we do not doubt in what we see that it is the Truth, in terms of the signs which are between us and Him. And His *huwiyya* is our sight and our audition. We, thus, do not see Him except by Him, not by our sight or audition.[17]

Ibn ʿArabī elucidates that the Cosmos is only a manifestation of God and, as such, all the attributes that are expressed in it are His attributes, they do not possess these attributes intrinsically. He further explains that man is fundamentally dependent on God for His existence and He is innately independent of us. If there is another association between us, it is a formal one. Because we have been created in the form of God, we ourselves manifest the divine attributes, we thus see Him through ourselves, and there can be no clearer portent than this.

In this passage, Ibn ʿArabī uses *huwiyya* as a synonym of the combined divine attributes. He explains that the attributes of the Cosmos are a manifestation

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However, Ibn ʿArabī clearly states that the Names *are* the divine essence, but also *not* the divine essence. Just as the Cosmos *is* the Names and the divine essence but also not either of them. It is in these subtleties that Ibn ʿArabī is entirely unique and defies affiliation with any school of thought. Qaiser Shahzad, "Accommodating Trinity: A Brief Note on Ibn ʿArabi's Views."

16 The Cartesian *cogito* famously proceeds from the same premise.

17 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:353.

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of the attributes of God, which in turn is His *huwiyya*. So the Cosmos and everything in it, such as the faculties of sight and hearing, are actually the *huwiyya* of God. In using *huwiyya* for sight and audition, Ibn ʿArabī conveys that *huwiyya*, though more fundamentally an expression of the Names as a collective in the Cosmos, can also be used for disparate manifestations of Names, such as those that are displayed by individual entities like sight and audition. It is therefore the case that the *huwiyya* of God is expressed everywhere and in everything, and the way it is perceived is also through the *huwiyya*. This perception is most acute in the station of *huwiyya*.

2.3 *The Station of* Huwiyya

We have hitherto concentrated mainly on the manifestations of *huwiyya*, but if everything is a manifestation of the divine *huwiyya*, then the way in which God is known through the creation is also an aspect of *huwiyya*, and this gnosis is most profound in the rank of *huwiyya*, as Ibn ʿArabī tells us in the *Futūḥāt*,

> He, the Exalted, did not manifest Himself to him [i.e. Mūsā] except in the Muḥammadan form, so he saw Him in a Muḥammadan vision. And that is the most perfect vision (*akmal ruʾya*) in which the Truth may be seen, by it he [i.e. Mūsā] was raised to a station (*manzil*) which none but the Muḥammadans attain, and that is the station of *huwiyya*. So in the unseen, his sight persists … and this was the sight of Abuʾl-Saʿūd ibn al-Shiblī in Bagdad who was among the principal companions of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlī.[18]

The station of *huwiyya*, according to the Andalusian, is one of the loftiest that may be attained, and in it the most complete divine vision may be seen.[19] Ordinarily the preserve of the Muḥammadans, Mūsā, due to his request to see God,[20] was granted this status. The sight of the Muḥammadan gnostics persists in the realm of the unseen, asserts Ibn ʿArabī, and in so doing, refutes the notion that the unseen cannot be seen. For the gnostic, when he reaches the level of *huwiyya* in which he forges an intimate bond with the divine, sees through God. It is then that nothing of his self remains and God becomes the seer, the seen and indeed sight itself, a state to which the Sufi adverts when he says,

18 Ibid., 6:385–386.

19 Some scholars believe that Muḥammad saw God without any veils in a perfect vision during the ascension. However, most orthodox scholars maintain that this was not the case. For details of this debate, see al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 17:57–61.

20 Qurʾan, 7:143.

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> God, the Exalted, says about *huwiyya* that *He is the First and the Last.*[21] … After my coming into existence, the prayer[22] was split evenly between me and Him so there was nothing there but a worshipper. *Each one knows its own* [*manner of*] *prayer and praise*,[23] so he was my audition and sight. And He did not make hear save Himself so He is the First and the Last.[24]

"Seeing God" here, in Ibn ʿArabī's opinion, signifies God being the sight and audition of the gnostic as nothing of the gnostic remains, so fully is he immersed in the divine. This passage bears a striking resemblance to the introductory part of the chapter of Ādam where Ibn ʿArabī cites the verse: *To Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned.* The mystic adds, "as it began from Him."[25] Both these sections asseverate that God is everything: He is the beginning and the end. The existents are receptacles which, by absorbing and emitting the Names, "worship" God. They are, in and of themselves, nothing but what they have received.

The Muḥammadan gnostic who has reached the station of *huwiyya* is able to carry out this function with utmost fidelity as he is the locus of and has the capacity to manifest all the Names. This concept is explicated comprehensively in the chapter of Ibrāhīm where Ibn ʿArabī, dissecting the epithet of this prophet, *khalīl Allāh* (an intimate friend of God), clarifies that it was bestowed upon him not on account of his devotion to God, as is usually believed, but because of "his penetrating (*takhallul*) and encompassing everything by which the divine essence is characterized."[26] Not just manifestation of the Names, then, the purity of manifestation is also paramount. The gnostic in the station of *huwiyya* not only manifests all the Names, he manifests them with uncompromised fealty.

2.4 *Summary of* Huwiyya *in the* Futūḥāt

The foregoing in no way presumes to analyze all the facets of *huwiyya* in the *Futūḥāt*. Neither was this the objective. We exculpate ourselves from censure

21 Qurʾan, 57:3.

22 By "the prayer," Ibn ʿArabī refers to *sūrat al-Fātiḥa*.

23 Qurʾan, 24:41. It is important to note that the verb *ʿalima* in this verse could refer to the creation (in which case the verse would be translated as I have done here), or to the Creator (in which case the translation would be: *Of each, He knows their prayer and praise*). I have chosen to translate it as the former because I believe it is more consistent with Ibn ʿArabī's assertion.

24 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:395.

25 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 49.

26 Ronald Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qurʾānic Prophets*, 71.

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on the Kantian grounds that "ought" implies "can" and, given the sheer volume of the *Futūḥāt*, it was not something that could have been accomplished. This is not to say, of course, that the aforementioned analysis is not representative of some of the main contexts in which the term is employed. Observing Ibn ʿArabī's sundry uses of the term *huwiyya*, we note that these aspects of *huwiyya* are nevertheless connected and indicate different facets of God.

The *huwiyya* of God, says Ibn ʿArabī, is the collective of all the divine Names that are manifested in the Cosmos. But all created things also have a *huwiyya* and this, too, is an expression of the divine *huwiyya*, as it is through God's essential *huwiyya* that everything comes into existence, something to which Ibn ʿArabī repeatedly alludes. An inextricable link between the divine *huwiyya* and the creational *huwiyya* is consequently forged: the former is the source and cause of the latter. When used in the context of the Names, the term also connotes their amalgamation, which is not necessarily the case when it is applied to created beings since the creation does not usually manifest all the attributes of God in a single locus. This brings us to the third manner in which the term is used: to denote the station of *huwiyya*. Ibn ʿArabī explains that though most created things do not express all the divine Names, there is one being that does: Man, when he has reached the station of *huwiyya*. More commonly known in Ibn ʿArabī's parlance as the Perfect Man, he alone manifests all the Names and therefore his *huwiyya is* the divine *huwiyya* because in this state nothing of his self remains. If this annihilation in the divine engenders a manifestation of all the Names in a single locus, it also manifests them in the purest way.

Leaving the *Futūḥāt* after so brief an engagement conjures images of the greedy abandoning their sweet hexagons in Borges' Library of Babel "urged on by the vain intention of finding their Vindication." Yet we leave in the sure knowledge that the *Futūḥāt* has operationalized the term *huwiyya* in three important contexts, and that we may have ample opportunity to see how these uses fare in the unforgivingly terse terrain of the *Fuṣūṣ*.

3 *Huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ*

Huwiyya is recruited and wielded so many times and in so many different ways in the *Fuṣūṣ* that to navigate its labyrinthine uses without a roadmap would require the sense of direction of Daedalus. So to make sense of the term as employed in this work, I propose to compartmentalize the usages and view them as discrete focal points to elucidate what Ibn ʿArabī is immediately trying to impress on the reader. This analysis, superficial as it must of necessity be,

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will demarcate the general area of engagement vis-à-vis Ibn ʿArabī's conscription of *huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ* such that a vague outline of the term will emerge. After this, some context will be provided by taking the treatment of *huwiyya* in one particular chapter—that of Yūsuf—which seems to encapsulate and exemplify the major facets of the term as defined in the rest of the work. It must be conceded, even at this early stage, that the chapter of Yūsuf does not, and cannot, contain all the aspects of *huwiyya* expressed in the *Fuṣūṣ* as a whole, but it is, nevertheless, useful in conveying an impression of the intricate matrix Ibn ʿArabī invariably constructs, with this term being one of many in a tight yet fluid system.

There are some patterns that appear when *huwiyya* is analyzed in the *Fuṣūṣ*, concepts and ideas that gravitate towards and orbit around this term so as to assert their incontrovertible association with and their concrete connection to it. It is upon these concepts and ideas, terms, Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions that I would like to focus. Aggregation of these distinct data sets will conjure an integrated and holistic image of *huwiyya*, as Ibn ʿArabī views it, and will taxonomize its most prominent meanings.

3.1 Huwiyya *and Its Synonyms*

If the *Rasā'il* definition granted us a starting point for *huwiyya*, then the *Futūḥāt* usage permitted us a glimpse of it in action. We now look to the *Fuṣūṣ* for an unhampered panorama of all its denotations and connotations. The *Futūḥāt* analysis determined three general frameworks in which *huwiyya* operates, and though valuable as a propaedeutic study, we would be committing the Thalesian error of gazing at the sky while falling in a well if we did not conduct a more focussed surgical approach in which synonyms and antonyms of *huwiyya* are scrutinized to ascertain what the immediate meanings of the term are; the meanings beneath our feet, as opposed to those in the heavens. It is to this micro-analysis in the *Fuṣūṣ* that we now turn. First of the synonyms of *huwiyya* to be considered is *ʿayn* (entity).

3.1.1 Entity

Entity (*ʿayn*) and *huwiyya* function as synonyms in the *Fuṣūṣ* on numerous occasions and in varied ways. Ibn ʿArabī, keen to spotlight the identity of the terms, writes,

> All the divine Names are ranked in terms of the precedence of one over another. Likewise, are the differing ranks of what is manifested in creation, such that it may be said, "This [person] is more knowledgeable than that [person]," despite the unification of the entity (*aḥadiyyat al-*

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> *ʿayn*). And just as when you give precedence to one divine Name, you call it and describe it by all the Names, likewise is [the case for] that which is manifested in creation: it has the capacity to be [called by] everything over which it is superior.[27] So every part of the Cosmos is the whole Cosmos, that is, it accepts the fragmented realities of the whole Cosmos. Thus, our saying, "Zayd is less knowledgeable than ʿAmr" does not contradict the *huwiyya* of the Truth being the *ʿayn* (entity) of Zayd and ʿAmr, but it is more perfect (*akmal*) and knowledgeable in ʿAmr than in Zayd, just as the divine Names are of differing ranks but are not other than the Truth.[28]

Replete with esoteric arcana, this passage requires some unpacking. First, Ibn ʿArabī reveals that the *huwiyya* of God is the essence of the created manifestations of that *huwiyya*. It is clear from the passage that Ibn ʿArabī denotes the divine Names, viewed as a collective, by *huwiyya*. In other words, the combined Names of God are the essence of the phenomenal manifestation of those Names in the sensible world. This is congruent with Ibn ʿArabī's emanatory conception of the formation of the Cosmos. We note that *huwiyya* is *ʿayn* and *ʿayn huwiyya*, when *huwiyya* signifies the unified entity of all the divine Names. Being categorically synonymous in this passage, the two terms—*huwiyya* and *ʿayn*—could be substituted for one another in both cases without alteration in meaning.

Next, on a more general level, this passage elucidates the duality inherent in *huwiyya* of, firstly, the Names, and then the existents, as manifestations and loci of those Names. Ibn ʿArabī uses the term "unification of the entity" (*aḥadiyyat al-ʿayn*) to explain this duality. This expression, like all in Ibn ʿArabī's writings, is considered, as implicit within unity (*aḥadiyya*) is multiplicity, since it is nothing but the coming together of disparate entities. It appears Ibn ʿArabī is saying that the Names operate on two levels: on the lower level, they are discrete forces that are expressed in the sensible world as individual existents. But while a higher Name incorporates a lower one and its corresponding locus manifests the lower Names,[29] on a higher, more rarefied level, they all allude to and are part of the divine *huwiyya*, just as the existents emanating from them are also the *huwiyya*. This is why "every part of the Cosmos is the whole Cosmos (*ʿālam*)."

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27 For an excellent analysis of the concept of a superior Name incorporating all the Names below it, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 99–107, 106–107.

28 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 153.

29 See Izutsu, *Sufism*, 104–107.

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The only difference, then, between the manifestation of one Name and that of more than one Name, is the level of perfection (*kamāl*) with which they communicate the *huwiyya* of God. Ibn ʿArabī, however, does not see this duality as a true duality since the existents in the Cosmos are simply an ineluctable consequence of the Names.

In the chapter of Yūnus, Ibn ʿArabī again refers to the aforementioned rarefied level of *huwiyya*:

> So nothing proceeds from Him that is not His entity (*ʿayn*); rather, His *huwiyya* is the entity (*ʿayn*) of that thing and it is what reveals to him [i.e. the gnostic, the meaning] of His saying, *And to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned*.[30]

Everything in the Cosmos is the essence and *huwiyya* of God because they are manifestations of God's Names, claims the Andalusian. This is precisely why "*to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned*," because they are nothing but He to begin with. Ibn ʿArabī clearly adverts to the known God in the form of the Names by his designation of *huwiyya*. Significantly, although the *huwiyya* refers to all the Names collectively, the existents that manifest just one of the Names are still labeled God's *huwiyya* as, through the manifestation of one Name, they allude to all of them.

Some tentative conclusions may be drawn from our initial foray into the fecund lands of the *Fuṣūṣ*. Ibn ʿArabī defines *huwiyya* as the combination of all the divine Names, viewed as a whole, and uses *ʿayn* as its synonym in many places. Commonly referring to all the Names, just one Name, or the phenomenal manifestation of one Name, may also be called *huwiyya* as it alludes to the collective *huwiyya*. Additionally, though appearing in two incarnations, *huwiyya* and *ʿayn* are not recruited by Ibn ʿArabī to express the unknowable God.[31] If this is a denotative destiny to which *ʿayn* is not equal, there are others that stand ready for this purpose. *Dhāt* (essence) is one such candidate.

30 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 170.

31 It may be apposite to note here that in Greek philosophy, the unknowability of God is a concept that occurs first in Philo, according to Wolfson, who writes, "It was introduced by Philo as a philosophic inference from the scriptural teaching of the unlikeness of God." Wolfson, "Philosophical Implications of the Problem of Divine Attributes in the *Kalam*," 76.

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3.1.2 Essence

Against the backdrop of the chapter of Shuʿayb in the *Fuṣūṣ*, the identity of essence (*dhāt*) and *huwiyya* is most strikingly articulated. Ibn ʿArabī, conceptually bisecting the nature of God, remarks,

> The Truth has two kinds of manifestations (*tajalliyāt*): a manifestation of the unseen and a manifestation of the seen. From the manifestation of the unseen is bestowed preparedness (*istiʿdād*) upon which is the heart, and it is the manifestation of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) whose reality is to be hidden, and it is the *huwiyya* which He affirms as being necessary of Himself by His saying "*He*" about Himself.[32]

Ibn ʿArabī discusses here two aspects of God—the unknowable, remote God; and the known God manifest and immanent in the Cosmos. It is the unseen and unknowable God, says the mystic, who bestows preparedness (*istiʿdād*) upon the heart of the gnostic. Ergo, preparedness comes directly from this remote God who bestows it so that man may be a locus for His Names.[33]

Uncharacteristically unequivocal, Ibn ʿArabī announces that it is this God—the God who bestows the preparedness, the God who is unseen and unrepresented in the Cosmos—whose "essence (*dhāt*) is to be hidden," and this is His *huwiyya*. This corresponds with Ibn ʿArabī's definition of *huwiyya* in the *Rasā'il*. But while we were not apprised of what God "in the realm of the unseen (*ʿālam al-ghayb*)"[34] pertained to in the *Rasā'il*, here we are instructed that it is not simply any and all pre-phenomenal realms that act as precursors to the phenomenal one, it is actually the realm of the Absolute—God in His incomprehensible reality. The *huwiyya* and *dhāt* of God, Ibn ʿArabī avers, is His remote self "whose reality is to be hidden" as it cannot be manifested or even comprehended by the conditional.[35] It is this that He has necessitated upon Himself "by His saying *'He,'*" that is, by declaring His absolute oneness and asserting His absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*), as opposed to the contingent existence (*wujūd muqayyad*) of everything else. This is His unseen reality—His true reality.

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32 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 120.

33 For an insightful analysis of this concept see Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 114–136, 124–125.

34 Ibn ʿArabī, *Rasā'il Ibn ʿArabī*, 538.

35 It cannot be comprehended by the existents as "Duality is inherent in speech and rational thought. We affirm God's unity-*tawḥīd*-but in doing so we establish the reality of duality, since it is we who speak." And on this rarefied level, there is no duality. (Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 49.)

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Two things of immense importance emerge from this passage: the use of *dhāt* and *huwiyya* to denote the unknowable, remote God when previously *huwiyya* was used to connote the known God through all His Names; and *huwiyya* and *dhāt* referring, as a corollary of this, to absolute existence in contradistinction to contingent existence. Furthermore, from Ibn ʿArabī's definition in the *Rasā'il*, we deduce that this—the unknowable, absolutely existent God—is the primary signification of *huwiyya*, as it is the one Ibn ʿArabī solely identifies in his terse definition.

We see here how Ibn ʿArabī uses linguistic ambiguity to create conceptual abstruseness by enlisting the same terms in the service of entirely different notions. Indeed, in the chapter of Hūd, Ibn ʿArabī again speaks of *huwiyya* and the divergent preparednesses of men, but this time, the emphasis is very different:

> Know that the knowledge of the divine through [spiritual] tasting (*al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya al-dhawqiyya*) received by the people of God, the Exalted, is different in accordance with differing abilities received by it [i.e. the divine tasting] even though it returns to one essence. For God, the Exalted, says, "I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, his foot with which he walks."[36] So He mentioned that His *huwiyya* is the limbs themselves, which are the servant himself. The *huwiyya*, therefore, is one but the limbs many.[37]

Knowledge of the divine through [spiritual] tasting (*al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya al-dhawqiyya*), to which Ibn ʿArabī refers, seems not to be knowledge of the remote God that is intuited by the gnostic as it was in the previous passage, even though Ibn ʿArabī suggests that it is different for each gnostic in accordance with his capability or preparedness. This knowledge appears to be the potentiality to bypass the sensible realities of the world to intuit the underlying reality behind it: God.[38] Therefore, it is the ability to see the world as a manifestation of the Names of God. Ibn ʿArabī claims that each gnostic is able to do this to a different degree. This reading of the passage is buttressed by the prophetic tradition Ibn ʿArabī believes underscores his point, for in it God states that He is the limbs of His servant, to which the Sufi appends, "So He mentioned that His *huwiyya*

36 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 81:38.

37 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 107.

38 Such pantheistic proclivities have been displayed by many philosophers throughout history, notably John Scotus Eriugena and Spinoza.

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is the limbs themselves, which are the servant himself. The *huwiyya*, therefore, is one but the limbs many." Ibn ʿArabī explains that though the limbs of men are many, they are all naught save various manifestations of the divine *huwiyya*, that is, loci of His Names.[39]

The analysis of these two passages bespeaks two types of preparedness and, correspondingly, two types of *huwiyya*: the preparedness to intuit the remote God, God in His absoluteness—a rank only the most adept Sufi who has arrived at the highest echelons of gnosis can perceive; and its analogous *huwiyya* denoting the unknowable God. This is the most fundamental signification of *huwiyya*, as mentioned earlier. But then there is another, secondary preparedness and its complementary *huwiyya*—the ability to glimpse the world as it truly is, as a manifestation of the Names of God, by circumventing the ostensible façade of the material world. The *huwiyya*, in this case, is an aggregate of all the divine Names. This theme is revisited by Ibn ʿArabī in the chapter of ʿĪsā, where Ibn ʿArabī uses another term, *nafs* (self), interchangeably with *huwiyya*. It is to this term that we now turn our attention.

39 Such is the linguistic ambiguity in this passage that it could also potentially refer to the remote God. For if we suppose that the knowledge that is bequeathed in accordance with "differing abilities" or preparednesses is that of intuiting the remote God, and it is this knowledge that returns to one entity (*ʿayn*)—*ʿayn* naturally being used here to denote the unknowable God—then the passage almost completely mirrors its Shuʿaybian counterpart. However, then Ibn ʿArabī cites the tradition that asserts man is a manifestation of God's Names, that is, the known God, concluding the analysis with the statement, "The *huwiyya*, therefore, is one but the limbs many," meaning *huwiyya*, as a symbol for all the Names is one, but the sensible manifestations of that *huwiyya* are many.

A breakdown of this reading indicates that Ibn ʿArabī begins the section discussing the remote God, using "entity" (*ʿayn*) as a means of articulating it, but then speaks about the known God, seemingly in order to explain the point he raised about the unknown God. The contradiction, I believe, is caused by the interpretation of the role the prophetic tradition plays in this passage, for if it is assumed that it is employed in a literal manner, as would be the most apparent reading, then it can only refer to the known God. And since the first section refers to the unknown God—there would a profound and irreconcilable discrepancy.

However, if we proceed conceptually, a clearer image develops. Ibn ʿArabī comments that (1) the knowledge of the remote God is known to gnostics in accordance with their preparednesses. (2) This knowledge, though different for each gnostic, pertains to the same essence, that is, the same remote God. (3) This is like the prophetic tradition where God compares Himself to the various limbs of man. (4) The *huwiyya* is one but the limbs are many. Framed in this way, it becomes clear that Ibn ʿArabī does not use the tradition in a literal way but rather in an analogical fashion—to show that different aspects can refer to the same reality. Specifically, to explain that differing levels of intuition of different gnostics vis-à-vis the unknowable God still refer to the same remote God.

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3.1.3 Self

The prognostication of a conversation that will take place on the Day of Judgement between ʿĪsā and God[40] forms the setting for the synonymy between these two terms. In the Qur'an, God interrogates ʿĪsā about whether he instructed his followers to worship himself and his mother as gods. ʿĪsā replies,

> *If I had said it, You would have known it*, because You are the speaker, and whoever says a thing surely knows what he is saying. And You are the tongue with which I speak, as the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, informed us from his Lord in the divine traditions, when he said, "I am his tongue with which he speaks."[41] So He makes His *huwiyya* the very tongue of the speaker but attributes the speech to His servant. Then when the righteous servant completed his response by saying, *You know what is in my self* (*nafs*), the speaker is God, "and I do not know what is in it." So the negation of knowledge vis-à-vis the *huwiyya* of ʿĪsā is in terms of *huwiyya*, not in terms of his being a speaker or one possessing [the ability to produce] an effect (*athar*).[42]

Furnishing the clearest articulation of the unity between God and man, the significance of prophetic tradition in which God pronounces He is the limbs of His servants, in the context of *huwiyya*, is as evident as it is unsurprising. Ibn ʿArabī seamlessly alters the role of God from observer, in the literal reading of the Qur'an, to agent, in his conceptual outlook. ʿĪsā, in his defense, alleges God would surely have known if he had made claims to divinity as He witnesses everything. Going further, Ibn ʿArabī affirms that God's knowledge is more robust than this, as He *was* the speaker. If this is the case, then why question ʿĪsā about this at all? The mystic counters, "He makes His *huwiyya* the very tongue of the speaker but attributes the speech to His servant." Therefore,

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40 Interestingly, this conversation occurs in the past tense in the Qur'an, thereby underscoring its inevitability. See al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, 6:241.

41 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 81:38.

42 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 146. In this passage, Ibn ʿArabī contrasts *huwiyya* with effect (*athar*). ʿĪsā does not know what is in his *huwiyya*, but he knows, and is responsible for, his actions and the effects of those actions. Ibn ʿArabī uses the term *athar* to refer to the effects left behind by ʿĪsā. These effects allude to ʿĪsā's existence as *athar* denotes the "remnant of something." (Muḥammad ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān al-ʿArab*, 1:69.) But ʿĪsā's existence itself alludes to God's existence as he is a manifestation of and a locus for His Names. In this sense, ʿĪsā is an *athar* of God. Ibn ʿArabī's outlook is entirely Qur'anic as God declares in the Qur'an: *We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifest unto them that He is the Truth*. (Qur'an, 44:53.) Hence, ʿĪsā is a sign of God's existence as he is His *athar*.

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though God's *huwiyya* is the organ of speech, the speech itself is attributed to ʿĪsā, and it is about this attribution that he is questioned.[43]

Subsequently, Ibn ʿArabī cites ʿĪsā's expostulation: *You know what is in my self* (*nafs*). Adding by way of commentary, "And I do not know what is in it." This addition closely mimics the Qur'anic verse: *And I do not know what is in Yours*,[44] but the meaning is entirely different. For Ibn ʿArabī does not follow the Qur'anic argument in which ʿĪsā professes his innocence of the charge levelled against him of claiming divinity for himself and his mother, and God knows this because He knows everything, including what is hidden in the deepest recesses of his self, whereas he does not have the same knowledge about God. Instead, according to Ibn ʿArabī, ʿĪsā is expounding the nature of his lack of knowledge, claiming that he does not know what is in his own self. The Sufi then further explains this mode of defense, "So the negation of knowledge vis-à-vis the *huwiyya* of ʿĪsā is in terms of *huwiyya*, not in terms of his being a speaker or one possessing [the ability to produce] an effect (*athar*)." This means that ʿĪsā avows not to know his self (*nafs*) while God knows it as it is His *huwiyya*. This absolves ʿĪsā from any wrongdoing as it was God who was the sole agent, with the role of ʿĪsā being demoted to that of an unwitting locus of divine manifestation, one who did not even know what his own self was.

This line of reasoning poses the ineluctable question: If ʿĪsā, one of the most revered prophets, does not know his self (*nafs*), what is the meaning of Ibn ʿArabī's favored prophetic tradition: *whoever knows his self* (*nafs*)*, knows his Lord*? The answer lies in what Ibn ʿArabī himself says about this tradition and its relationship with *huwiyya* in the chapter of Shuʿayb:

> So whoever knows himself knows his lord, and his self (*nafs*) is nothing but the *huwiyya* of the Truth, and there is nothing of *kawn*,[45] that is, or will be, without the *huwiyya* of the Truth; rather, it is the *huwiyya* itself.

43 For more detail on the ostensible dichotomy between God being the sole agent and the paradigm of reward and punishment, see section on form (*ṣūra*).

44 Qur'an, 5:116.

45 *Kawn* is a term that is integral to Ibn ʿArabī's conceptual outlook. Man is the *kawn jāmiʿ*, the all-encompassing being, the one who embodies all the divine Names. Ibn ʿArabī uses this term to denote any and all manifestations of God. In this regard, he does not veer too far from the literal signification of the term, for as Aḥmad ibn Fāris (d. 395/1005?) notes, "Everything that will be, or is, is a *kawn* if it occurs or comes." (Aḥmad ibn Fāris, *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lugha*, 5:148.) In Ibn ʿArabī's semantic *Weltanschauung*, everything that is a result of God's ontological mercy is a *kawn*, as affirmed by al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413?) who remarks that "according to the gnostics, *al-kawn* is a term for the emergence of the Cosmos." (Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 197.)

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> So He is perceived, known and established (*muqirr*)[46] in this form (*ṣūra*), [but] also not perceived, unknown and not established (*munakkar*) in this form.[47]

This passage betokens the clearest indication of the synonymy between *huwiyya* and self (*nafs*). Ibn ʿArabī unequivocally avers that "his self (*nafs*) is nothing but the *huwiyya* of the Truth." Moreover, not only is the self (*nafs*) the *huwiyya* of God, but *everything* is a *huwiyya* of God. This is an unmistakable reference to the *huwiyya* of God being an aggregate of all the divine Names manifested in the sensible world. Additionally, chiming in with the meanings encountered in the *Futūḥāt*, since every thing has a *huwiyya*, the applicability of the term to individual loci of the Names, notwithstanding their usual denotation of all the Names as a collective, is established as one Name alludes to all the Names.

Ibn ʿArabī continues, "So He is perceived, known and established (*muqirr*) in this form (*ṣūra*)"[48] as His *huwiyya* is manifested in the form of existents. This is the passive reading of the text, which I believe is closer to Ibn ʿArabī's intended meaning. The active reading would be: "So He is the gnostic, the knower and known[49] in this form." Meaning more or less the same thing, Ibn ʿArabī says everything is a manifestation of His Names. ʿĪsā, being a noble prophet and a gnostic, naturally knows this, as it is known by all gnostics.

Yet Ibn ʿArabī goes on to say, "[But] He is also not perceived, unknown and not established (*munakkar*) in this form."[50] God, that is, the remote God, the true God, is not perceived or known in the Cosmos, and He is not any of the existents, as nothing can even fathom Him. Here we find the solution to Ibn ʿArabī's interpretation of ʿĪsā's response. He believes that ʿĪsā retorted by saying that God knows what is in his self, while he did not because if he knew his self (*nafs*), he would know God, as knowing one leads to knowing the other. But this is only possible in the context of the known God and knowing Him through

46 This means a camel whole pregnancy is established, according to Lane. (Lane, *Arabic Lexicon*, 2: 2502.) Ibn ʿArabī seems to be using it in the sense of *muqarrar*, that is, "established" or "settled," as evidenced by its antonym being *munakkar*.

47 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 122–123.

48 For a full discussion on form (*ṣūra*), see below.

49 I have, in imitation of Ronald Nettler (*Sufi Metaphysics*, 133), translated *muqirr* as "known" even though this is far from the literal signification of the term since the meaning Ibn ʿArabī seeks to convey is best expressed by it. This is apparent from the antonym of *muqirr* being *munkar*, and the overall context.

50 This is, again, if the passive reading is preferred. The active reading would be: "While [also] not being the gnostic, nor the knower and unknown in another form." Both readings have the same overall meaning.

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His loci in the sensible world, or seeing through the ostentation of creation to the Names of God of which they are an expression. This is the preserve of the gnostics.

ʿĪsā, conversely, says that he does not know his self (*nafs*) because he adverts to the way in which God is not known in the Cosmos. Ibn ʿArabī clarifies this when he asserts that ʿĪsā's lack of knowledge is "in terms of *huwiyya*, not in terms of him being a speaker or one possessing [the ability to produce] an effect (*athar*)," that is, it is in terms of God's absolute, remote existence and not His sensible representation in the world, about which ʿĪsā has knowledge.

ʿĪsā testifies that he does not know God as He is unknowable; however, he does intuit Him as do the most adept among the gnostics—those who have attained the highest ranks of gnosis. In this sense, *not* knowing God is a higher station of gnosis than knowing Him because one knows God through His Names, which is not the true God, but one does not know the true, remote God; and not knowing Him does not mean one cannot intuit Him, for this is precisely why the heart of the gnostic, according to Ibn ʿArabī, is even more comprehensive than God's mercy—it intuits His absolute reality whereas His ontological mercy can only bring forth creation as a manifestation of His Names, which is not His true essence.[51]

Deployed as synonyms by Ibn ʿArabī, not only do self (*nafs*) and *huwiyya* denote the unification of the Names—the way in which God is known in the Cosmos, they betray the remote God's true essence—the way in which He is not known. If these are the significations of self (*nafs*), a term that is intimately related to it and used interchangeably with it in the exegetical tradition—spirit (*rūḥ*)—may also be similar.[52]

3.1.4 Spirit

The interplay between *huwiyya* and spirit (*rūḥ*) is conspicuously paraded in the chapter of Ayyūb where Ibn ʿArabī takes great pains to explain the nature of God.

> The Truth, if you consider Him in His transcendence from the Cosmos, then He is far too exalted to have this attribute in this way.[53] [But] if the

51 For more details on the heart of the gnostic being more comprehensive than the mercy of God, see Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 114–137.

52 See al-Qurṭubī's commentary of verse, 39:42, in which he does not even acknowledge that there is a difference between the two, assuming absolute identity between them.

53 The attribute to which Ibn ʿArabī refers is that of either being pleased with someone or being angry at him, as is clear from the context.

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> Truth is the *huwiyya* of the Cosmos, then all the determinations do not come except from Him and in Him, and that is His saying, *And to Him the matter returns in its entirety*,[54] in reality (*ḥaqīqatan*) and through spiritual unveiling (*kashfan*). *So worship Him and in Him trust*,[55] through veiling and concealment. For there is nothing in the plane of possibility (*imkān*) more wonderful (*abdaʿ*) than this Cosmos because it is in the form of the Compassionate (*al-Raḥmān*). God created it, that is, His, be He exalted, existence was manifest through the manifestation of the Cosmos, just as man is manifested through the existence of his natural form (*al-ṣūra al-ṭabīʿiyya*). So we are His outward form (*ṣūratuh al-ẓāhira*) and His *huwiyya* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) of this form which regulates it. The regulation, thus, cannot be but in Him, just as it cannot be but from Him. He is, therefore, *the First*,[56] in essence (*biʾl-maʿnā*); *and the Last*, in form (*biʾl-ṣūra*); and He is *the Manifest*, through the changes in determinations (*aḥkām*) and states (*aḥwāl*); *and the Hidden*, in governance.[57]

A terse summary of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas regarding God and His relationship with the creation, the passage begins by questioning the conventional wisdom that God is either pleased or angered by the actions of men, but not both. Ibn ʿArabī notes that, since pleasure is the antithesis of anger and anger the antithesis of pleasure, the two are generally thought to be mutually exclusive. But this would mean that everything is not God, for if God is angry, He is not pleased, and if pleased, He could not be angry. The two could not reside côte à côte in their purest states. The impossibility of all things not being God leads the mystagogue to the solution of relativity—anger is the relative preponderance of anger over pleasure and vice versa. Such a theory maintains that though God is everything, He is relatively angry or pleased with man because of his actions—the paradigm of reward and punishment is maintained,[58] if mitigated (which is why Ibn ʿArabī argues that the people of hell shall eventually enjoy God's pleasure).[59]

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54 Qur'an, 11:123.

55 Ibid.

56 Qur'an, 57:3.

57 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 172–173.

58 For an overview of Ibn ʿArabī's eschatology, see Chittick, "Death and the World of Imagination," in which the author argues the essential orthodoxy of Ibn ʿArabī's eschatological outlook.

59 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 172. See also Chittick, "Death and the World of Imagination," 77–80. Of course, salvation *en masse* of mankind is a concept that has been postulated by many theologians. Origen (d. 254) went as far as to assert that all rational beings—humans, devils, angels—would be saved.

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Ibn ʿArabī cautions against a reductive view of God in which He is just angry or just pleased because this is the preserve of the existents; God transcends such binary categorizations. He goes on to say that God is everything "in reality" (*haqīqatan*) and "through spiritual unveiling" (*kashfan*), that is to say, God is everything in reality and the gnostics perceive this underlying truth through their spiritual unveiling. He continues, "*So worship Him and in Him trust*, through veiling and concealment." Here Ibn ʿArabī contrasts what God is in reality and how this reality is perceived through spiritual unveiling with the way in which He should be worshipped. In essence, what Ibn ʿArabī instructs is that though God is everything and the gnostics know this, courtesy of their spiritual insight, He should be worshipped as the one true God—alone and transcendent. This is worshipping Him "through veiling and concealment;" that is, veiling and concealing the true reality of God. For none but the gnostics fathom the real nature of God, of His being everything, and thus most people do not have the capacity to worship God in this way. The gnostics, too, must also fall in line with the *vulgum pecus* for fear of corrupting them. In this way the status quo of worship and obedience, of reward and punishment is maintained, even though the reality of God, according to Ibn ʿArabī, is very different.

Next, Ibn ʿArabī reaffirms the concept of God being everything. He writes, "For there is nothing in the plane of possibility (*imkān*) more wonderful (*abdaʿ*) than this Cosmos because it is in the form of the Compassionate (*al-Raḥmān*)."[60] Significantly, Ibn ʿArabī uses the term "more wonderful" (*abdaʿ*), which is the same term that denotes "more original." In other words, the Cosmos is the most wonderful and most original creation because it is a locus for the manifestation of the Name "the Compassionate" (*al-Raḥmān*), under which all other divine Names are subsumed.[61] Ibn ʿArabī gives the analogy of man's corporeal form, his "natural form" (*al-ṣūra al-ṭabīʿiyya*) in relation to his spirit and remarks that this is the position the Cosmos occupies in relation to God's *huwiyya*:

> So we are His outward form (*ṣūratuh al-ẓāhira*) and His *huwiyya* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) of this form which regulates it. The regulation, thus, cannot be but in Him, just as it cannot be but from Him.

60 This may also be a nod to the "best-of-all-possible-worlds" theodicy of which Ibn ʿArabī, as well as his debatable precursor, al-Ghāzālī, was a proponent. Al-Ghazālī remarked: "There is nothing in possibility more wonderful than that what is" (*laysa fi'l-imkān abdaʿ min mā kān*). For more details on this, see Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*.

61 See Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 99–107.

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The relationship between the outward form and the *huwiyya* is therefore twofold: first, the outer form, that is, the Cosmos, manifests the *huwiyya* (and by *huwiyya* is meant a combination of all the divine Names, or just the Name, *al-Raḥmān*, which would still constitute all the Names as all are incorporated in it); second, the Cosmos is regulated by the *huwiyya*, just as the body is regulated and controlled by the spirit (*rūḥ*). This means that not only is the *huwiyya* the cause of all the phenomenal manifestations in the world, it is also the cause of all the actions, as the actions of the loci of the Names themselves are also determined by the *huwiyya*.

The spirit (*rūḥ*) is identical to the *huwiyya* as a symbol of all the Names in this passage,[62] but this is only in the context of the analogy Ibn ʿArabī deploys. This means that although there is interchangeability between the terms, a distinction remains. But, argues the Andalusian, both terms are exactly the same in the manner in which they interact with their outer forms. Concluding his analysis with a commentary of the most famous verse of *sūrat al-Ḥadīd*,[63] Ibn ʿArabī reiterates his aforementioned positions.

3.1.5 Summary of *Huwiyya* and Its Synonyms

Analysis of the synonyms of *huwiyya* has broadened our understanding of the ways in which Ibn ʿArabī uses this term. The following conclusions may now be drawn:

1. The fundamental signification of *huwiyya* is the remote God—unknowable to the existents who cannot even fathom Him. The only slight exceptions to this are the most advanced gnostics who intuit God. A necessary corollary of this is the allusion of *huwiyya* to the absolute existence of God, as opposed to the contingent existence of the Cosmos.
2. *Huwiyya* refers, secondarily, to the divine Names as a collective. However, though *huwiyya* refers to all the Names, just one Name, or the phenomenal manifestation of one Name, may also be called *huwiyya* as it alludes to the entire *huwiyya*. *Huwiyya*, therefore, operates on two levels: the lower level is the *huwiyya* of one Name that is manifested in the Cosmos by one thing.

62 For terms as symbols denoting a combination of things, see Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture*.

63 This verse has great mystical significance and has been used by Sufis throughout the ages as a conduit to understanding the nature of God. It could be that its significance is due to the tradition which states that the Prophet used to recite the *musabbiḥāt* (i.e. *ṣūras* that begin by praising God) before he slept and remarked that there is a verse among them that is better than a thousand verses. ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl ibn Kathīr avers the verse to which the Prophet alluded is this verse. (See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿaẓīm*, 4:387.)

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This thing, by its existence, betokens the higher *huwiyya* of all the Names viewed as a whole.

3. The relationship between the Cosmos and the *huwiyya* is twofold: first, the Cosmos manifests the *huwiyya*, which is the unification of all the Names, or is just one Name, but it is also controlled by the *huwiyya*. So the *huwiyya* is not just the phenomenal manifestation of the Names, it is the actions of the Names as well.

Fundamentally, from the foregoing we have learned that *huwiyya* is God in all His aspects, in all His forms, and all His manifestations in different planes of existence. If the meaning of *huwiyya* drifts and changes from one passage to another, it is because the articulation of each facet of God is different. But this does not signify that *huwiyya* cannot be defined, or that it has no central meaning. On the contrary, the basic meaning of *huwiyya* is defined, the definition delivered by none other than Ibn ʿArabī himself in the *Rasā'il*. The difficulty in defining *huwiyya* stems, not from its lack of definition or central meaning, but from that *meaning* being impossible to express. For the basic meaning of the term is God, the incomprehensible, God in His true essence. This is the *huwiyya* of God. Intrinsically, nonetheless, this denotation adverts to an entity that is beyond the ken of human encompassment. Hence, the term is further applied to an amalgamation of all the Names. In other words, a God that man can know, talk about and forge a relationship with. The most articulate definition is then the Cosmos, which is a manifestation of and a locus for the Names—something everyone can palpably relate to.

This means that the most accurate definition of *huwiyya*, which is the unknowable God, is the least defined; and the most diffuse definition, which is the tertiary definition of the Cosmos as a manifestation of the Names, becomes the most defined, since it is a means of our comprehending God. They are the Names of God we know and relate to the most as it *is* us, and everything around us. So there is no dualism, on the most basic level, between the synonyms and antonyms of God as all is God, just not the true God.

Having studied one side of the coin—that of synonyms of *huwiyya*—we shall now proceed to the other—antonyms—in order to excavate other nuances of this term.

3.2 Huwiyya *and Its Antonyms*

Antonyms are useful as they serve to exclude certain assumptions that may have been made about complex and multifaceted terms such as *huwiyya*. In defining what something is not, we learn, to an extent, what it is. Important for the elucidation of most terms, analysis of antonyms is a *sine qua non* for terms that change guises many times and operate on different levels simultaneously,

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as we have shown *huwiyya* does in the *Fuṣūṣ*. Through the use of antonyms, we can further hone our understanding of *huwiyya* by further delineating it. We begin our investigation with the divine Names.

3.2.1 The Divine Names

Scrutiny of the synonyms of *huwiyya* has shown that the term is often used to denote either all the divine Names as a collective—its most frequent usage—or to denote a single Name, in which case the Name betokens all the Names. It has also shown that the most basic meaning of *huwiyya* is the remote, unknowable God. This being the case, there must be some opposition between *huwiyya*, a term for the unknowability of God, and the Names that seek to define Him, which is why the most fundamental antonym of *huwiyya* is the divine Names. We thus have a situation where both *huwiyya* and the divine Names denote both their original meanings and their antonyms simultaneously.

The clearest example of the antinomy between these terms is given in the chapter of Nūḥ where the eponymous Prophet's people conspire against him:

> *And they conceived a mighty plot*,[64] for the call to God, the Exalted, is deception played on the one called as He is not absent at the beginning such that he may call [to Him] to a destination. So this is the deception itself, *with insight*,[65] and He informed him that the matter is for Him in its entirety. They therefore responded with deception as he called them thus. And the Muḥammadan knows that the call to God is not in terms of His *huwiyya*, it is only in terms of His Names. He said, *On the Day We shall gather the God-fearing to the Compassionate as a* (*goodly*) *band*, so it is [written] with a particle of goal (*ḥarf al-ghāya*),[66] and connected with a Name, so we know that the Cosmos is under the provident care of a divine Name, which makes it incumbent upon them to be God-fearing.[67]

According to Ibn ʿArabī, the people of Nūḥ rejected his call to worship the transcendental God as they were proponents of comparability and the distance between his notion of unmitigated transcendence and their categorical immanence was too great. Here Ibn ʿArabī interprets the Qurʾanic verse, *And*

64 Qurʾan, 71:22.

65 Ibid., 12:108.

66 The particle of goal (*ḥarf al-ghāya*) here refers to the word *ʾilā'* (to) which, grammatically, denotes, "in the direction of, toward … a direction, a goal, or an obtainable end." (Fischer, *A Grammar*, 164, n. 303.)

67 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 71–72.

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they conceived a mighty plot, as a retaliatory plot due to Nūḥ's initial "deception" in calling them to just transcendence. But, far from censuring Nūḥ for his call, Ibn ʿArabī defends him, saying, "The call to God, the Exalted, is deception played on the one called as He is not absent at the beginning such that he may call [to Him] to a destination." In other words, *any* call to God is a deception because the call is to a deity that is everything and everywhere, even as the term "call" implies directional specificity, as is evident in Nūḥ's statement, "I call *to* God" (*adʿū ilā Allāh*).[68]

Another reason Ibn ʿArabī does not reproach Nūḥ for the nature of his call is because he acknowledges that this was not something he did out of folly but rather *with insight*, when God had "informed him that the matter is for Him in its entirety."[69] So Nūḥ knew the dual nature of God: His transcendence *and* His immanence, and it is precisely because of this that he invited his people to God in the manner he did.[70] His call, emphasizing transcendence, was a consequence of their insistence on immanence, and their steadfast rejection of the call was a consequence of the nature of Nūḥ's call. So things could not have been otherwise. This is not a rebuke of Nūḥ, it is a simply a statement about the way things were.

After detailing the reaction of Nūḥ's people to his call, Ibn ʿArabī comments, "And the Muḥammadan knows that the call to God is not in terms of His *huwiyya*, it is only in terms of His Names."[71] After exonerating Nūḥ, Ibn ʿArabī offers subtle reproach of Nūḥ's people, insinuating that, had Nūḥ called the Muḥammadan in the same manner as he did his people, he would have responded to his call as he knows that "the call to God is not in terms of His *huwiyya*, it is only in terms of His Names,"[72] that is to say, he would have known that the call must of necessity accentuate transcendence even as he accepts God's immanence. The reason for this is that the call to God must have an inherent element of direction—it must guide *to* something, just as God says in the Qur'an that He shall gather the God-fearing *to* the Compassionate. This verse exemplifies a directional quality and the gathering being *to* a Name of God. Ibn ʿArabī then concludes by saying, "So we know that the Cosmos is under the provident care of a divine Name which makes it incumbent upon them to

68 Ibid., 72.

69 Ibid., 72.

70 Maḥmūd Ghurāb comments that Ibn ʿArabī always emphasizes both the transcendence and immanence of God, and this is why his works are in conformity with the canonical texts of Islam. See Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*, 8–9.

71 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 72.

72 Ibid.

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be God-fearing." Ergo, it is the effect of the Name "the Compassionate" that it compels the righteous to be thus, and it is the call *to* that Name which results in this.

We have come full circle. The call to God, according to Ibn ʿArabī, must be just that, *to* God—the transcendent, and *away* from comparability. This was the nature of Nūḥ's call. His people, due to their lack of gnosis, adhered to one aspect of God while ignoring the other. They were not wrong in their belief in the immanence of God, only in their absolute attachment to it to the exclusion of transcendence. The Muḥammadan would have known this, he would have heeded Nūḥ's call because he would have accepted that the call must be to the Names and not to the *huwiyya* of God.

So what do *huwiyya* and the Names mean here? We see that they function as antonyms, but what is the meaning of each? Ibn ʿArabī, it appears, identifies a call towards transcendence with a call towards the Names, and contrasts this with the call to *huwiyya*.[73] Before proceeding further, we must identify the three antonyms implicit in this statement. The Names have been juxtaposed with the emphasis on comparability in which the people of Nūḥ were engaged. Ibn ʿArabī states that the Muḥammadan knows that the call to God is in terms of the Names. This is in contradistinction to the people of Nūḥ who did not recognize this. However, in their idolatry, they accepted the Cosmos as a manifestation of the Names. The reason Ibn ʿArabī is somewhat critical of them here is that they expected the call to be in terms of a single Name of God, as the idols they worshipped were only a locus of one of the Names of God—this was their folly. The Muḥammadan knows, as should the people of Nūḥ, that the call to God is not in terms of one Name, it is in terms of God as a collective of *all* the

73 It is, of course, possible that Ibn ʿArabī identifies Nūḥ's call to transcendence with the call to *huwiyya*, saying that it should have been a call to the Names, that is, immanence. And the Muḥammadan recognizes this. But I do not believe such a superficial interpretation applies here since it does not fit into Ibn ʿArabī's general assertions in the *Fuṣūṣ*, and elsewhere. This is because he is still very punctilious in affirming the ostensible rules of Islamic Law and all that that necessitates. For more details see Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Al-Fiqh ʿind'l-shaykh al-akbar Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī*. See also Maḥmūd Ghurāb's introduction of Ibn ʿArabī's *Al-Ṭarīq ilā Allāh taʿālā*, in which he seems to place Ibn ʿArabī in the category of people who accept both the exoteric and the esoteric, but only insofar as it conforms with Islamic law. (Ibn ʿArabī, *Al-Ṭarīq ilā Allāh taʿālā*, 14.) Moreover, when a text is particularly inscrutable and the author's intentions obscure, rather than capitulate to the Derridaesque argument that a writer's intentions cannot be known, one may have recourse to "analytical behaviourism." This means, as Mark Bevir remarks, "the fact that we cannot know other minds is irrelevant because intentions are not mental states. … Authorial intentions must be observable as behaviour." Bevir, "The Errors of Linguistic Contextualism," 295.

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Names. The first opposition, therefore, is between the worship of one Name, and that of all the Names as a collective. Nūḥ was right to call to God as a combination of all the Names, his call could not have been otherwise; his people were wrong to reject this call and adhere to the worship of just one locus of divine manifestation, to just one Name.

Ibn ʿArabī then contrasts this call of God as an amalgamation of all the Names, with the call to *huwiyya*. He states that the call to God cannot be in terms of *huwiyya*. This is because *huwiyya* here refers to the unknowable, remote God. It is axiomatic that the call to God cannot be in terms of His absolute *huwiyya* as it is beyond the ken of human comprehension. One cannot call to something that is unfathomable, with which no relationship can possibly be forged. It must thus be to the knowable God, the God communicated through *all* the Names. This is not a case of what Nūḥ's call was and what it should have been, as appears *prima facie*, it is an explanation of what the call towards God must be, and what it cannot be.

The categorical antinomy between the *huwiyya* of God and His Names finds stark expression in the characterization of Nūḥ's call, and the reaction to it. But if the Names are antithetical to *huwiyya*, then their ostensible manifestation, the form (*ṣūra*) they assume in the sensible world, must also be so. It is on this term, in the context of *huwiyya*, that we now focus.

3.2.2 Form

The form (*ṣūra*) of the Cosmos, of Man, of all existents, is a manifestation of and a locus for the Names of God. As such, there is an inherent opposition between it and the unseen *huwiyya* of God, as stated above. Ibn ʿArabī, anxious to underline this in the chapter of Nūḥ, writes,

> Surely for the Truth is, in every creation, a specific manifestation. So He is manifest[74] in every intelligible thing (*mafhūm*) and hidden (*bāṭin*) from all comprehension, except from the comprehension of one who says "The Cosmos is His form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya*," and that is the Name, "the Manifest" (*al-Ẓāhir*) just as He is, in a sense, the spirit (*rūḥ*) of what is manifest so He is "the Hidden." His connection to what is manifest in the forms of the Cosmos is therefore the connection of the spirit that regulates the form.[75]

74 Ibn ʿArabī references verse 57:3 of the Qur'an, which features heavily in his explanation of the comparability and transcendence of God.

75 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 68.

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Disclosing the reality of the divine Name, "The Manifest," Ibn ʿArabī says that God is thus called because He is manifested in "every intelligible thing (*mafhūm*)." He then juxtaposes this with God being "hidden (*bāṭin*) from all comprehension." In this succinct sentence, Ibn ʿArabī explicates the two facets of God: His observable phenomenal presence, His *ẓāhir*, betrayed by the form (*ṣūra*) of the Cosmos, and His hiddenness, His *bāṭin*, elucidated by the *huwiyya* that eludes comprehension. He identifies the manifest, *ẓāhir*, facet of God with what is understood, that is, everything that is intelligible (*mafhūm*), because God, according to Ibn ʿArabī, is understood through the Cosmos since it is a manifestation of His Names. The all-inclusive touchstone of this is the Perfect Man who epitomizes all the Names in one locus and is most conducive to furnishing an understanding of God as he is His most intimate manifestation. Ibn ʿArabī explains the concept in this very chapter:

> The Exalted said, "*We will show them Our portents on the horizons*," and that is that which is segregated from you, "*and within themselves*," and that is your essence, "*until it will be manifest on to them*," that is, to the onlooker, "*that He is the Truth*," as you are His outer form and He is your spirit. So you are to Him as your corporeal form (*ṣūra jismiyya*) is to you, and He is to you as the spirit governing your corporeal form.[76]

But if what is manifested is identified with what is understood, it naturally follows that what remains unseen is identified with what is not understood. Indeed, Ibn ʿArabī states that the *bāṭin* of God is "hidden from all comprehension."[77] The question is: what is the relationship between these two facets of God? The mystic responds, "So His connection to what is manifest in the forms of the Cosmos is the connection of the spirit that regulates the form." In other words, God's *ẓāhir* is the form of the Cosmos, and His *bāṭin* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) regulating and directing that form. Here, as previously, spirit (*rūḥ*) is said to govern the form.[78] However, in this passage, Ibn ʿArabī adds that seeing and understanding God are facets that belong to the manifest God, manifest, that is, through the forms of the Cosmos, and not seeing and not understanding are facets of the unseen *huwiyya* of God. This raises a further question as to what Ibn ʿArabī means by the unseen and incomprehensible God. Is this the

76 Ibid., 69.
77 Ibid., 68.
78 See above.

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unknowable God, not understood by the creation as they do not possess the capacity to comprehend Him? Or is it simply the unseen God—God as a collective of the Names?

In answer to this question, Ibn ʿArabī comments that the only person who understands God is the one who says, "The Cosmos is His form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya*." It is the gnostic, therefore, who appreciates and acknowledges both the manifest (*ẓāhir*) and hidden (*bāṭin*) aspects of God, to wit, His phenomenal forms in the Cosmos and His *huwiyya*, which here denotes the Names that give rise to those forms. It is he who understands God. Thus, it is the Names as a collective to which Ibn ʿArabī refers by the unseen, incomprehensible God.[79] He is incomprehensible to the ignorant who refuse to acknowledge His inner aspect: His being the spirit that governs and regulates everything in the Cosmos.

This inability to see the world as it really is—as a manifestation of the Names—means that those who see simply the ostensible forms of the universe as something dissociated from God actually do not see the *ẓāhir* of God either, for what they see are just hollowed out forms that mean nothing. They are thus veiled from *both* the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* of God, as both are different facets of the same reality. Ibn ʿArabī alludes to this in the same chapter:

> This definition incorporates both your manifest (*ẓāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*) aspects, for the form (*ṣūra*) that remains when the spirit that governs it departs is no longer a human, but it may be said that it is "the [outer] form of a man" (*al-ṣūra al-insāniyya*), there being no difference between it and the [outer] form of a piece of wood or a stone. Nor would the name of "man" be used for it, save metaphorically, not literally.[80]

Seeing the outer forms of the Cosmos does not mean one sees the *ẓāhir* of God, unless he has the spiritual awareness to attribute that form to God. If he cannot, then he simply sees barren objects. A scathing indictment for those who are veiled, Ibn ʿArabī intimates they cannot even see what is truly in front of them. They see nothing but disparate forms, segregating everything and denying the reality that runs through all of them.[81] He perorates against such people:

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79 It is, of course, possible that Ibn ʿArabī refers to the incomprehensible, unknowable God by this term. And one remains on unsteady ground with Ibn ʿArabī when it comes to deciphering what exactly his terms refer to. However, because he states that the gnostic who acknowledges both facets of God *understands* Him, as opposed to simply *intuits* Him (see above), it is most likely that he refers to God as a collection of all the Names, since even the most adept gnostic simply does not have the capacity to *understand* God as He truly is.

80 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 69.

81 The idea that one entity or being is beneath everything can be traced throughout the

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> Why do you differentiate [between God and the creation] saying the matter is the Truth in its entirety or the creation in its entirety? It is the creation in one connection (*nisba*) and the Truth in another connection while the entity (*ʿayn*) is one. So the very form (*ṣūra*) that manifests is the same form which accepts that manifestation. So He is the One who manifests and the one to whom is manifested. Look at how wondrous the matter of God is in terms of His *huwiyya* and in terms of His connection to the Cosmos in the realities of His beautiful Names![82]

Recruiting form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya* in the same sense as above—to denote the outer forms of the sensible realm, and God as a collective of all the Names that furnishes the realm with existence, respectively—Ibn ʿArabī excoriates those who compartmentalize God and the creation, saying that it is either one thing or the other. The essence and underlying reality of both, says the mystic, is one. The only difference, then, is how you look at it. Ibn ʿArabī concludes by announcing that the whole matter is wondrous because the One who manifests and the One to whom is manifested is the same: both are God "in terms of His *huwiyya*," which is "the realities of His beautiful Names." Conspicuously conscripting the conjunction to elucidate what he means by *huwiyya*, Ibn ʿArabī defines the term here in his own words.

In the chapter of Shuʿayb, Ibn ʿArabī again underscores the difference between the form (*ṣūra*) of man, as an expression of the Names, and the *huwiyya* of God, as an amalgamation of those Names. He writes,

> The Truth has surely informed [us] that He, be He exalted, is the *huwiyya* of each of the parts [of man]. There is therefore no agent but the Truth, and [only] the form (*ṣūra*) belongs to the servant while the *huwiyya* is inserted (*mudaraja*) in Him, that is, in His Name and nothing else, because He, be He exalted is what is manifested.[83]

Ibn ʿArabī explains that God is the *huwiyya* of each part of man, in other words, everything that enables him to carry out actions. There is, therefore, no agent but God; all actions that occur in the Cosmos are because of Him as only "the form (*ṣūra*) belongs to the servant." But we have seen that God is relatively

philosophical tradition from Parmenides, who thought that whatever could be conceived of was all one, indivisible Being; to Kant, who suggests that the flux of existence and change in time is underlied by one "substance."

82 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 121.

83 Ibid., 151–152.

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angry or pleased with His creation based on their actions. So if the actions are all God, how can this not impinge upon, or indeed eliminate, the paradigm of reward and punishment? The inherent dichotomy present in these two concurrent scenarios, God being the sole agent and man being punished for his actions, is not even acknowledged by Ibn ʿArabī because for him there is no contradiction or inconsistency.

The basis of the problem is a misunderstanding of the nature of God. Ibn ʿArabī affirms that everything in the Cosmos is God—as an expression of His Names, thus, everything that happens in the Cosmos is executed by God. However, this, as we have said before, is not the true God—the incomprehensible, remote God. Man is questioned, is rewarded, is punished based on his actions as an expression of the Names of God. In this sense, it is God who is the sole agent in the Cosmos. But there is an omnipresent barrier between man and God to which Ibn ʿArabī constantly returns and from which his outlook emanates because God, in His incomprehensible truth, is not the Cosmos, He is not man, and He is not, consequently, the actions of man. It is for this very reason that knowing what Ibn ʿArabī means by his use of terms like *huwiyya*, by which he designates both the unknowable God and the God of the Names, is so vital.

It is evident that Ibn ʿArabī refers to the Names of God by *huwiyya* in this passage. Indeed, he explains it himself when he says, "… the *huwiyya* is inserted (*mudraja*) in Him, that is, in His Name and nothing else." Yet it appears from this that the *huwiyya* is *in* the Names of God, which, in turn, are the hidden aspect (*bāṭin*) of man. This raises the issue of whether Ibn ʿArabī also views *huwiyya* as something that is disparate from the Names and included in them. The literal reading of the passage militates against such an interpretation; Ibn ʿArabī simply uses *huwiyya* as a symbol of all the Names, and says it is part of the one Name being manifested. In this way, one Name is all the Names, and all the Names are one Name, not because one Name alludes to all the Names, nor because a higher Name includes those below it, as mentioned earlier—this is certainly the case—but in a more literal way, since the *huwiyya*, which is all the Names, is present in each Name. Indeed, it *is* each Name. Thus, one Name of God is all His Names as they are all He—this is His *huwiyya*, and each Name has a part in it. The only difference, then, between one Name and another Name and all the Names, is their form (*ṣūra*) in the phenomenal world: each Name has a distinct form (*ṣūra*) in the Cosmos, and it is only in the form (*ṣūra*) of Perfect Man that they find their combined expression.[84]

84 Ibn ʿArabī articulates this point in *al-Tajalliyāt* in the following way: "Since man's reality and developed form are in particular ranks … and [he is] the detailed form of everything in

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The foregoing demonstrates that *huwiyya* is the Names of God, and the Names of God are what are manifested in the forms, or *ṣuwar* (pl. of *ṣūra*), of the Cosmos. *Huwiyya* and form (*ṣūra*) are thus antonyms in the sense that *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, or apparent and hidden, are antonyms.

The innumerable forms (*ṣuwar*) in the Cosmos, then, are the knowable God, the God of the Names "because He, be He exalted is what is manifested." This, nevertheless, begs the question: Is there a difference between the Names themselves and the form (*ṣūra*) in which they are manifested? Or are they simply a direct differentiation of the Names, there, in essence, being no difference between the two? Ibn ʿArabī supplies an uncharacteristically forthright answer to this question in the *Futūḥāt* when he again turns his attention to the anticipated dialogue between God and ʿĪsā on the Day of Judgement. Abdicating responsibility for his deification by generations of followers on the grounds that he commanded no such action, ʿĪsā vindicates himself and assumes the burden of proof himself by calling God as a witness to this fact. Yet Ibn ʿArabī sees things another way:

> There is a difference between what a thing is and what is manifested in its form (*ṣūra*) … for when Allāh, the Exalted, said that man was a creation in His form (*ṣūra*), ʿĪsā remarked, "*You were the Watcher over them*,"[85] so he differentiated between the Truth and those who were in His form (*ṣūra*).[86]

The point Ibn ʿArabī makes in this passage has massive ramifications for his entire metaphysics. Ibn ʿArabī, in the clearest possible terms, remarks that "there is a difference between what a thing is and what is manifested in its form (*ṣūra*)," and this difference is not in terms of the fidelity with which the thing is manifested, as we saw earlier; rather, it is an intrinsic difference. Ibn ʿArabī reaches this conclusion because even though everything including, and especially, man is a form (*ṣūra*) of God, He is still a *Watcher over them*. This means there is a difference between God the agent and God the Watcher, as He cannot be both in the same capacity. God the agent is the form (*ṣūra*) of the Names in the sensible world, and God the Watcher *is* a Name. If there is a difference between them—Ibn ʿArabī does not state what this difference is—

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the Cosmos' condition, he is thus a book of the particulars of existence and its criterion, as alluded to by the saying, *We shall show them Our portents in the universe and within themselves*." (Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Tajalliyāt al-ilāhiyya*, 9.)

85 Qur'an, 5:117.

86 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:20.

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then the paradigm of reward and punishment is reaffirmed, not just because God the agent is distinct from God the incomprehensible, but because God the agent is different from the God of the Names.

We thus arrive at three levels of divine consciousness and corresponding articulation. God the unknowable, the remote, is the truest yet least defined of these. He is categorically dissociated from His creation as it cannot even comprehend Him. On this purest and truest level, all the paradigms of good and evil, of reward and punishment, still have meaning. There is then the God of the Names—the Names as they really are before their differentiation into the forms (*ṣuwar*) of pre-sensible and phenomenal worlds. On this plane, too, does the aforementioned paradigm retain its resonance because there is an innate difference between a Name and its manifestation, its form (*ṣūra*). Only on the lowest and paradoxically most defined level—the plane of God as the sole agent—are the lines of reward and punishment somewhat blurred. But if Ibn ʿArabī is at great pains to assert this is not the only level, his actions in this regard are yet more emphatic.[87]

3.2.3 Belief

Belief (*iʿtiqād*) appears as an antonym of *huwiyya* in the chapter of Shuʿayb where Ibn ʿArabī contrasts the God that is created in the belief of men with his *huwiyya*. Dealt with in previous works,[88] the objective here is not to explain the concept of 'the God of belief' (*al-Ḥaqq al-iʿtiqādī*), but to shed light on its relationship with *huwiyya* and whether the two are influenced by one another. The God of belief seems to present a religious diversity that "bespeaks the validity of all belief … because the beliefs—like all 'creation'—*are* God's self-revelation."[89] And indeed, Ibn ʿArabī's recurrent circumlocutions on the need to bypass these superficial differences are evidence of this.[90] Nevertheless, if the God of belief is the tertiary manifestation of God's self-revelation, as it is the action of the existents who themselves are phenomenal forms of the Names (see above),

87 See Claude Addas, *The Quest for the Red Sulphur*, for more details about Ibn ʿArabī's life. He was known to be extremely punctilious in the observance of religious ordinances—a clear indication that the unmitigated monism with which his metaphysical outlook is usually identified is misguided. See also Chittick, trans., *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts*, xii–xiii; Maria De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 169.

88 This concept is deftly handled by Nettler in *Sufi Metaphysics*, 126–130. See also Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 97–100.

89 Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 127. The same point is also made in Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, 148–149.

90 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 121.

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then this manifestation and its call to recognize God in all His aspects and beliefs does not encroach upon the religious exclusivity perpetuated on the basic level of divine consciousness. For in his explication of this very concept, Ibn ʿArabī chides the Muʿtazilites for doubting the all-encompassing mercy of God, thereby giving credence to one set of beliefs over another.[91]

And so it is that the gnostic who sees beyond the God of beliefs in the phenomenal realm to the Names themselves, and possibly even intuits the remote God, still abides by the dictates of his "God of beliefs" and the religious injunctions He imposes. Nor is this mere affectation, for the latter is conducive to arriving at an understanding of the former, as Ibn ʿArabī elucidates:

> As for *huwiyya*, some servants are certain in their belief (*iʿtiqād*) that God is such and such. So when the veil is uncovered they see the form of their belief, which is true and they believe it. And [when] the knot is undone then the belief dissipates and knowledge through witnessing (*mushāhada*) returns.[92]

Acknowledging the significance of the beliefs held by men, Ibn ʿArabī says they are "true." Not a barrier to gnosis, instead they are a conduit to it. But when "the knot is undone,"[93] people witness the truth which causes this belief to dissipate.

Accordingly, the God of beliefs leads to the God of Names and, ultimately, the remote God. Religious diversity asserted in the first phase is seemingly effaced in the second and third phases, for it is only the God of beliefs, the God that is everything in the Cosmos, including beliefs, that transcends religious parochialism. This parochialism is re-established in the God of the Names, who, as mentioned above, is not the same as His material manifestation. If it is reaffirmed in this secondary phase of the divine consciousness, the phase in which the paradigm of reward and punishment still holds significance, then it is yet more definite in the purest level—the level of the absolute, remote God, where

91 Ibid., 123–124.

92 Ibid., 124.

93 Nettler correctly identifies Ibn ʿArabī's conceptual "knots" that need to be untied to understand his metaphysical outlook. (Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 121–122.) Interestingly, Wittgenstein said the purpose of philosophy was to untie the knots in our thinking. (Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, 802.) What Nettler and Wittgenstein both mean, it seems, is that though the semantic gymnastics of analysts and philosophers may be intricate and elaborate, in the end they uncover simple and basic truths; in Kenny's words, just an ordinary piece of string.

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this paradigm finds its starkest expression. This does not negate the religious diversity of the first phase, but neither does it contravene the religious parochialism of the second and third.

If *huwiyya* represents variously the remote God, the God of the Names and God immanent in the Cosmos, then the God of beliefs will operate as a synonym or antonym of it, depending on the signification of *huwiyya*. In the above passage, Ibn ʿArabī says that some people believe God to be "such and such"—this is the God of their beliefs, but when spiritual witnessing occurs, as a result of this God of beliefs, they find that He is not what they had initially thought. This in no way diminishes the legitimacy of the God of beliefs—on the contrary, it reaffirms it. But neither is there parity between the God of beliefs and the God of the Names, which the gnostic observes in his spiritual witnessing (*mushāhada*), just as there cannot be parity between the God of the Names and the remote God.

Clearly, in the aforementioned citation, Ibn ʿArabī refers to 'the God of beliefs' by *huwiyya*. It is therefore the forms of God that are manifest in the Cosmos as expressions of His Names, which, as mentioned, is the tertiary and most defined definition of the term. This being the case, belief (*iʿtiqād*) here may more properly be thought of as a subset of form (*ṣūra*) since it is the form (*ṣūra*) of one's belief that one sees, as Ibn ʿArabī himself states: "They see the form of their belief (*ṣūrat muʿtaqadih*)." This raises the question as to why the term has been introduced as an antonym of *huwiyya*. The reason for this is that Ibn ʿArabī dismisses this initial synonymy between belief (*iʿtiqād*) and *huwiyya* in favor of the secondary antinomy when he says that this "belief dissipates and knowledge through witnessing (*mushāhada*) returns." Referring to the truer *huwiyya* of the collective Names themselves that lie behind this form (*ṣura*) of beliefs, Ibn ʿArabī claims that on this rarefied level, the two terms are antonyms: the *huwiyya* being the unified collection of the Names, and the form of beliefs (*ṣūrat al-iʿtiqādāt*) being the multitudinous manifestations of those Names in the created world.

Huwiyya and belief (*iʿtiqād*), conspicuously, are not the only antipodes in this quotation, for Ibn ʿArabī also juxtaposes spiritual witnessing (*mushāhada*) with belief (*iʿtiqād*). This spiritual witnessing, Ibn ʿArabī says, is opposed to beliefs, and since beliefs are what make sense to the rational intellect,[94] it is opposed to reason. But he affirms the legitimacy of the rational intellect, to a certain degree, because he says that the result of rational reflection—the God

94 For an excellent analysis of beliefs being the corollary of rational reflection in medieval Islamic thought, see Carl Sharif el-Tobgui, "Reason, Revelation and the Reconstitution of Rationality."

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of belief—is also true, if only in a partial way. Here, just as spiritual witnessing (*mushāhada*)—as the conduit to realization of the complete reality—is juxtaposed with belief (*iʿtiqad*)—as the means of gaining only the partial reality—so too is *huwiyya*—as the symbol of divine unity—contrasted with a form of belief (*ṣūrat al-iʿtiqād*)—as the form of only one facet of God.

Ibn ʿArabī revisits this issue of belief versus spiritual witnessing (*mushāhada*) when he says:

> *And We are nearer to him than* [*his*] *jugular vein.*[95] He did not specify a man, for divine closeness (*al-qurb al-ilāhī*) to the servant is present in divine revelation without any secrecy. So there is no closeness greater than His *huwiyya* being the very limbs and faculties of the servant, and the servant is naught save these limbs and faculties. He is thus the witnessed Truth (*Ḥaqq mashhūd*) in an imagined creation (*khalq mutawahham*). Hence, the creation is comprehended (*maʿqūl*), and the Truth is sensed (*maḥsūs*) and witnessed by believers and the people of spiritual unveiling. Those who are not from these two categories, for them the Truth is comprehended and the creation witnessed.[96]

Before embarking on the opposition between what is witnessed and what is imagined, or what is sensed and what is comprehended, it is important to note that Ibn ʿArabī uses *huwiyya* here as the unified composition of the Names that finds its sensible expression in the limbs of man. He therefore details the transition of the secondary phase of the divine, that of the Names as a collective, to the tertiary, the manifestation of those Names in the created world. What is more interesting is how Ibn ʿArabī interprets that transition. For he remarks that because the divine Names literally *become* the limbs of man, this means that God is witnessed, and the creation is imagined.

An outright reversal of the normal conception of man as an *expression* of the Names, Ibn ʿArabī says that there is nothing but the Names, man's existence is imaginary, the only things that really exist are the Names. A corollary of this, alleges Ibn ʿArabī, is that those with spiritual insight will comprehend what the creation actually is: nothing but the Names themselves, and will sense

95 Qurʾan, 50:16. This is the declaration of God through which He refutes the assertion of those who deny Muḥammad's message and say that there will be no resurrection. God affirms that He was not wearied by the first creation that they should doubt the resurrection, and that they will need to account for everything they say and do, which He is aware of as He is closer to them than their jugular vein.

96 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 108.

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and witness through it God, as He *is* the Names. Those bereft of this spiritual rank, however, will witness only the creation, that which is actually in front of them, but will comprehend that the Names of God are manifest in man.

The difference between the gnostic and the layman, then, is only that the former sees the Names, not their ostensible form in the created world, and the latter sees the form and understands that it is an expression of the Names.[97] But the ramifications of this slight difference are immense as the entire relationship with God and the creation is reversed. Also, by saying that the world is imagined, that is, the tertiary manifestation of God is not real in itself, Ibn ʿArabī reverses the religious diversity he allows in this phase, in the phase of the Names and that of the remote God. We thus find an explanation for one of the starkest paradoxes of Ibn ʿArabī's life: that of his ostensible championing of religious diversity and his punctilious observance of Islamic law.[98]

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97 This layman is still superior to the one who sees only the apparent forms of the world and denies their underlying reality completely.

98 Mayer observes that there is no contradiction between Ibn ʿArabī's assiduous orthopraxy (as evidenced by charges of his being a Zahirite, as well as a full mastery of Ibn Ḥazm's (d. 456/1064) works displayed in his *ijāza*) and his seemingly daring Qurʾanic interpretation. This is because "Ibn ʿArabī's intensely esoteric hermeneutic of the Qurʾan is often strictly in line with the literal sense of the text." (Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," 283.) It must be mentioned that the prevailing opinion is Ibn ʿArabī did not follow any school of thought and exercised independent reasoning (*mujtahid*). Maḥmūd Ghurāb cites specific examples of his divergence from the Zahirite school as proof of this assertion. See Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Al-Fiqh ʿind'l-shaykh al-akbar*, 7.

Further evidence of Ibn ʿArabī's orthodoxy, not just in practice, but also in thought and exortations, is found in his book, *What the Seeker Needs*, which is written in response to the following question by a student: "What should the seeker believe in and what should he do in the beginning, before anything else?" Ibn ʿArabī, in response to this, exhorts to oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) (and cites Qurʾan, 21:22 and 31:35, as proof) and to His transcendence (citing Qurʾan, 42:11, as proof). Finally, he enjoins observance of the law. (Ibn ʿArabī, *Divine Governance*, trans. Al-Halveti, 199–230.) Apropos of Ibn ʿArabī's conventional religious edicts (*fatāwa*), we need only look at his letter to the sultan of Konya counselling him on how he should deal with his Christian subjects, which was in complete conformance with ʿUmar ibn Khaṭṭāb's (d. 23/644) judgement. (See Robert J. Dobie, *Logos and Revelation*, 16.)

It is not surprising that Ibn ʿArabī should be so conservative in all facets of religion, if one considers the religious and cultural context in which he was born and raised. Scholem broaches the topic of the Andalusian's religious conservatism and the attempts to "pantheitize" him, when he remarks, "There is no such thing as mysticism in the abstract, that is to say, a phenomenon or experience which has no particular relation to other religious phenomena. There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on. That there remains a common characteristic it would be absurd to deny. … But only in our days has the belief gained ground that there is such a thing as an abstract mystical religion. One reason for

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Ibn ʿArabī explains this concept in different terms in the chapter of Ayyūb:

> One of the gnostics was hungry and so he wept. Someone who did not have insight into this field (i.e. gnosis) censured him, upon which the gnostic replied, "He has only made me hungry that I might weep." He means, "He has only tried me with affliction that I might ask Him to alleviate it from me, and this does not contradict my being patient." So [from this] we know that patience is only restraining oneself from complaining to other than God. And by "other" I mean a particular aspect (*wajh khāṣṣ*) from the aspects of God, since God, the Truth, has designated a particular aspect from the aspects of God and that is called the aspect of *huwiyya* (*wajh al-huwiyya*). So you should supplicate through this aspect for the alleviation of affliction, not other aspects which are called "causes" (*asbāb*). These [causes] are nothing but He in terms of the superiority of the matter in Himself. So the gnostic, in asking the *huwiyya* of the Truth to alleviate the affliction from him, is not veiled by all the causes being His essence from a particular standpoint.[99]

True patience is here defined by Ibn ʿArabī, not as abstinence from expressing displeasure or seeking help from God, but as not doing so to "other than God." This immediately poses the question: If everything in the phenomenal world is a manifestation of God, how can anything be "other than God?" Recognizing this may be a source of confusion. Ibn ʿArabī moves to dispel it forthwith with the clarification: "And by 'other' I mean a particular aspect (*wajh khāṣṣ*) from among the aspects of God." This "particular aspect," we are told, is the overt cause of things in the created world. Ibn ʿArabī acknowledges that these causes themselves are an aspect of God, since everything in the world is He. But blaming the superficial cause, while it is, in a sense, the true cause, is antithetical to patience. Instead, Ibn ʿArabī would have us supplicate to the "aspect of *huwiyya* (*wajh al-huwiyya*)" even as we comprehend that "[causes] are nothing but He."

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this widespread belief may be found in the pantheistic trend which, for the past century, has exercised a much greater infuence on religious thought than ever before. Its influence can be traced in the manifold attempts to abandon the fixed forms of dogmatic and institutional religion in favor of some sort of universal religion. … History rather shows that the great mystics were faithful adherents of the great religions." (Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 26.) Leigh Eric Schmidt adds: "When turned into an essence and a universal, mysticism rapidly lost much of its grounding in history, cultural particularity, and place." (Schmidt, "The Making of Modern Mysticism," 288.)

99 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 174–175.

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Designating the Names of God as a collective by *huwiyya* in this passage, Ibn ʿArabī deems complaining and seeking succour to all the Names directly, bypassing the apparent causes, as the very definition of patience because it bespeaks awareness of the total reality of God as a combination of all His Names and facets, not just a particular one. The appeal to just one aspect of God, the discernible causes in the world, is impatience because it denies the underlying totality of the God of *all* the Names. This one aspect, rather than allude to the complete reality, obfuscates it. It is only the gnostic "not veiled by all the causes being His essence from a particular standpoint" who acknowledges this.

This passage again accentuates Ibn ʿArabī's disregard for the created world, even as he recognizes that it is a manifestation of the Names of God. The reason for this may be that there is an innate difference between a Name and its manifestation or because the created world is nothing in itself.[100] His loose attitude to reward and punishment, and his commitment to diversity of beliefs at this level, therefore, give way to a far more conventional outlook wherein one is exhorted to religious parochialism and appealing to God Himself. If this seems contradictory to the diversity he advocates in the created world, it is only because the world, as an expression of the Names, must necessitate this. The ultimate reference, however, must always be the "aspect of *huwiyya* (*wajh al-huwiyya*)," that is, the aspect of God that is *all* the Names themselves without any mediation by manifestations of those Names.

3.2.4 Summary of *Huwiyya* and Its Antonyms

Reinforcing some deductions, developing others and introducing others still, my analysis of antonyms may be summarized as follows:

1. The *huwiyya* of God denotes both His manifest (*ẓāhir*) and hidden (*bāṭin*) aspects. God's *ẓāhir* is the form of the Cosmos, and His *bāṭin* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) regulating and directing that form. Seeing and therefore understanding the Names are facets that belong to the manifest God—manifest, that is, through the form of the Cosmos that makes Him intelligible, and not seeing and not understanding are facets of the unseen God.
2. One Name of God is all the Names, and all the Names are one Name, not just because one Name alludes to all the Names, nor because a higher

100 Ibn ʿArabī sees no contradiction between, on the one hand, asserting the manifestation of the Names in the sensible world is different to the Names themselves and, on the other, claiming that the Names *are* the creation. The two abide simultaneously for him. It is therefore probably more correct to say that the Names *are* the created world, but the created world, in the way it is, is not the Names as they are.

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Name includes those below it, as mentioned earlier, but in a more literal way since the *huwiyya*, which is all the Names, is present in each Name. Indeed, it *is* each Name.

3. The *huwiyya* of God, as a symbol for all the divine Names, *is* the created world, but the created world, in the way it is, is not the Names as they are. This is a corollary of Ibn ʿArabī's assertion that there is a difference between what a thing is and its manifestation. Ibn ʿArabī further explains that, not only is this the case, but the manifestation of God's Name is nothing in itself, being only "imagined." So the locus of manifestation of a Name *is* the Name itself, but it is not like the Name, which itself is not manifest.
4. The *huwiyya* of one Name, while it may allude to all Names, may also obfuscate this underlying reality, just as it did with the people of Nūḥ who adhered to one Name, to one locus of divine manifestation, and just as it does to those who cling to perceptible causes in the sensible world, which, though one facet of God, as everything is a manifestation of His Names, is not the totality of all the Names.
5. *Huwiyya* has three significations: the remote God, the God of the Names and God as the Cosmos, as stated previously. Ibn ʿArabī advocates religious diversity in the last of these, but it is a diversity that dissolves in the first two, more fundamental, meanings. This is why Ibn ʿArabī reprimands the people of Nūḥ, for they did not appreciate that the call to God—Nūḥ's call—*had* to be to the God of all the Names, not just to one locus of His manifestation. The problem was not their worship of one Name; it was their denial of all the others, since on this secondary level, religious parochialism is re-instituted.

Mercurial in nature, Ibn ʿArabī's terms oscillate with the cadence of context. The same term may be a synonym and antonym of *huwiyya*, depending on the denotation of *huwiyya*. Strikingly emblematized in the passages of the God of Beliefs, such polyvalency is prevalent in other sections of the *Fuṣūṣ* too. Here we deliberate some of them.

3.3 *Synonyms as Antonyms and Antonyms as Synonyms*

Ambiguity inundates *huwiyya*. It is abstruseness that results, not only from the three significations of *huwiyya*—that of the remote God, the God of the Names and the God immanent in the Cosmos, and the corresponding pliancy of the terms that are its synonyms and antonyms—but also in the synonyms and antonyms themselves, with which Ibn ʿArabī takes characteristic semantic license. The result, seemingly, is a farrago of terms that are tightly contextualized and endeavor to resist application of basic meanings. But these terms do have basic

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meanings, which they offer up once the delicate mesh of terms is untangled. In order to do this, one of the two variables must be known—either the signification of *huwiyya*, or that of the synonym/antonym, for only then can we learn what the other means. This has hitherto been the approach, where the meaning of *huwiyya* has been deciphered from the synonyms/antonyms, and the latter employed to delineate the former.

In this methodology, we have, nevertheless, assumed a basic meaning for the synonyms/antonyms of *huwiyya*, for one cannot proceed to extract a meaning for either term if both variables are unknown. The basic meaning for the synonyms/antonyms has largely been provided by the context in which Ibn ʿArabī uses the terms, for even Ibn ʿArabī, as recondite as his metaphysics may be, does not render it completely incomprehensible to the reader. Having served its purpose, this system has furnished us with a reasonably good conception of *huwiyya*. But if our understanding of *huwiyya* has grown, then it behoves us to reverse-scrutinize passages that challenge the conventional basic meanings of the synonyms/antonyms so that we may ascend to an even plateau of understanding of *huwiyya*. These passages are the focus of our present examination.

3.4 *Form, the Synonym*

In its erstwhile incarnation, form (*ṣūra*) operates as an antonym of *huwiyya*, when *huwiyya* denotes all the divine Names as a collective. At its core, then, form (*ṣūra*) adverts to the multiplicity that results from the innumerable manifestations of the Names in the created world, whereas *huwiyya* signifies the unity of all the Names before such fragmentation occurs.[101] The interplay between divine unity and creational multiplicity is best summarized thus:

> Creation is nothing but the external manifestation or actualization of the ideas of God or the "essences." The secret of Creation … is that God manifests or reveals Himself in His own Ideas. In thus manifesting Himself God remains unchanged as He ever was, is, and shall be. God gives and yet preserves Himself, is multiplied and yet remains one. He manifests Himself according to the "aptitudes" of the things in which He is manifesting Himself. He bestows His attributes on His Ideas or forms or essences and they become things. The essences of things are in themselves non-existent.[102]

101 It must be remembered that though there is a successional element to this progression, it is devoid of temporality. For more details see Titus Burkhardt, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn ʿArabī*, in which the author explains this concept in depth.

102 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, 176.

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Perspicuous loci of divine manifestation, individual articles of existence are sensible expressions of one Name. If there is a creation that bucks this trend and amalgamates all the Names in one place, it is the Perfect Man. But this, too, far from being a materialization of the unity of the Names, is a gathering of their disparate forms; as such, it is still a manifestation of multiplicity—the only difference is that this multiplicity is displayed in one place. Ibn ʿArabī explains in the *Futūḥāt*,

> Through the Perfect Man is manifest the perfection of form (*ṣūra*). So he is the heart in the body of the Cosmos,[103] which is a term for everything besides God. He is thus the Frequented House (*Al-Bayt al-maʿmūr*) of the Truth which encompasses Him. The Exalted says in a reported Ḥadīth, "The Earth or heaven do not encompass Me, but the heart of a believing servant encompasses me."[104] So the rank of the Perfect Man is that of a heart between God and the Cosmos. And he is called a "heart" (*qalb*) as he is transmuted [verbal noun: *taqlīb*] into every form (*ṣūra*).[105]

Succinctly articulated here, the Perfect Man in Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics is the "heart in the body of the Cosmos," a term the author defines as "everything besides God." The Perfect Man encompasses in his form all the forms of everything that is manifest in the Cosmos, which themselves are a consequence of the Names. It is in this sense that he is "between God and the Cosmos" because "he is transmuted into every form (*ṣūra*)." "God" in this passage refers to the combination of the Names that bring forth the forms of the Cosmos—much like the most frequent usage of *huwiyya*—for it cannot be the remote God who is utterly dissociated from His creation and not expressed therein.

Ibn ʿArabī explains here, as he does in many other places, that the Perfect Man is a locus of manifestation of all the Names and thus "transmuted into every form (*ṣūra*)." However, this could mean one of two things: he could either be a manifestation of each individual Name in the Cosmos that is gathered in one form, or he could be the form of all the Names combined. The author clarifies that it is the former, since there is an innate difference between God and man, with the Perfect Man being "everything *besides* God." God is therefore a collective of all the Names, and the Perfect Man is a manifestation of each of

103 Ibn ʿArabī's language here evokes parallels with Plato's "world-soul" which "exists in the body of the world, just as there is a soul which exists in the body of any living being." See Wolfson, "Extradeical and intradeical interpretations of Platonic ideas."

104 I could not trace this Ḥadīth in any of the conventional compilations.

105 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:4.

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those Names, *not* a manifestation of God. This is why he is linked to "the body of the Cosmos" by Ibn ʿArabī and not God, since he combines in his form all the disparate Names manifested in the Cosmos and not all the Names as a collective that is the knowable God. The form of the Perfect Man, too, then, is an expression of multiplicity and not unity; he combines all the Names, but once they are segregated from the divine *huwiyya*. It is for this reason that form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya* are essentially antithetical.

Ibn ʿArabī touches on this central issue in the chapter of Hūd when he asks, "Where are the God-fearing (*al-muttaqūn*, sing. *muttaqī*), that is, those who have taken God as a protection so the Truth is their outwardness, meaning, their outer forms (*ṣuwar*)?"[106] God, as in the God of the Names, says Ibn ʿArabī, is the outer form of His *righteous* servants. Not intrinsically an expression of the Names of God, man only when he is God-fearing, when he takes "God as a protection," manifests His Names.[107] The antinomy here between the term "God," as the unification of the Names,[108] and the numerous forms (*ṣuwar*) of men that manifest them, collecting, through their virtues, the Names of God, is italicized. So it is that the form of a man may manifest one of the Names, or some Names of God, but as he ascends the ranks of gnosis and righteousness, he becomes a locus for more of the Names, until he expresses all of them. The application of the term form (*ṣura*) is hitherto consonant with its erstwhile analogues.

But Ibn ʿArabī goes on to say: "It is possible for the God-fearing (*muttaqī*)[109] to be he who makes himself a protection for the Truth with his form since the *huwiyya* of the Truth is the faculties of the servant." Man may use his form, says Ibn ʿArabī, to safeguard the divine Names, in effect, being a "protection" for God precisely because the *huwiyya* of God is his faculties. Put another way: as the faculties of man are the *huwiyya* of God, the basis of these faculties—the form of man—may be a protection for the divine Names. Ibn ʿArabī inverts the notion of *taqwā* (verbal noun of *muttaqī*) from seeking protection *in* God to being a protection *for* God. In the former case, man seeks God's protection from evil deeds and soars through the levels of righteousness, thereby mani-

106 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 112.

107 This concept is covered in much greater detail in the section of *ṣūra*.

108 Ibn ʿArabī makes this explicit in the passage immediately prior to this one. See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 112.

109 *Muttaqī* literally means to protect oneself, but is used to denote one who is God-fearing or God-conscious. (See Lane, *Arabic Lexicon*, 8:3059.) Ibn ʿArabī, nevertheless, seems to be employing the literal meaning and using it as a basis for his argument of protecting the Names of God. This is yet another example of the "hyperliteralism," which is a characteristic feature of Ibn ʿArabī's works. Kristin Zahra Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, 41.

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festing more and more of the divine Names. It is to be a complete locus of His Names that he desires, even as he knows that God's unity cannot be expressed by a form that expresses multiplicity. In the latter case, on the other hand, it is the Names of God that are protected by the form of the Perfect Man because his faculties *are* the God of the Names, and it is his form that allows his faculties to be so. Ibn ʿArabī adopts form as a synonym of *huwiyya* in this scenario, as illustrated by the following syllogism:

– The *huwiyya* of God = The faculties of man
And
– The faculties of man = The form of man
Ergo
– The *huwiyya* of God = The form of man

So what differentiates this case from its predecessor? Why does Ibn ʿArabī underscore the antinomy between *huwiyya* and form (*ṣūra*) in the first sentence, only to subvert it in the next? The beginning of the final sentence may hold the key: "It is *possible* for the God-fearing (*muttaqī*) to be he who makes himself a protection for the Truth with his form," says Ibn ʿArabī. He does not say it is the natural state of affairs, whereas he has no such reservations about the former case in which the form of "those who have taken God as a protection" seems to be antithetical to the *huwiyya* of God.

Ibn ʿArabī seems to be articulating that the form of man, which exhibits multiplicity, is opposed to the unity of the God of the Names, but it is possible, in exceptional cases, for there to be such identity between God and the Perfect Man, that his form becomes a locus of manifestation for the divine *huwiyya* itself. This does not obviate the inherent multiplicity in the form of man, but neither does it restrict it to multiplicity; the remit of the Perfect Man may even extend to expressing unity.

Reiterating the synonymy between *huwiyya* and form (*ṣūra*) in the chapter of Shuʿayb, and availing himself of the gestalt of Aristotleian hylomorphism, Ibn ʿArabī writes:

> The one who has attained realization (*ṣāḥib al-taḥqīq*) sees multiplicity in the One, just as he knows what is indicated by the Names—even though their realities are various and many—is [of] one entity (*ʿayn*). This multiplicity is comprehensible in the One of essence (*wāḥid al-ʿayn*). So in manifestation (*tajallī*), multiplicity is witnessed in one essence just as the *hayūlā* is in the limit of each form and, despite the multiplicity and variety of forms, is from one *jawhar* in reality, which is its *hayūlā*. Thus, whoever

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> knows himself in this way surely knows his lord, for He created him in His form; rather, he is His *huwiyya* and reality.[110]

To fully appreciate what Ibn ʿArabī conveys in this passage, we need first to understand his conception of prime matter (*hayūlā*), substance (*jawhar*) and how it relates to form (*ṣūra*). Suʿād al-Ḥakīm offers a terse definition of what Ibn ʿArabī considers to be the prime matter (*hayūlā*):

> Ibn ʿArabī moves along the Aristotelian line in differentiating between form and prime matter (*hayūlā*), or between body and soul in the same man. But he goes deeper and does not restrict it to man; rather, he generalizes it to all the levels of existence, such as the Cosmos, the Truth, the creation, the meanings.[111]

Prime matter (*hayūlā*), fundamentally, is what an existent is made of, in contradistinction to its form, which is what makes it what it is, according to Ibn ʿArabī. The substances (*jawāhir*, pl. of *jawhar*), on the other hand, are those things which constitute reality and remain constant. Al-Qāshānī defines the substances (*jawāhir*) of knowledge (*ʿulūm*), intelligences (*anbāʾ*) (or reason, as stated in another copy of the text) and gnoses (*maʿārif*) as "the realities which do not change or alter with the changing Islamic laws, nations and times, as God, the Exalted, said, *He has ordained for you that religion which He enjoined upon Nūḥ, and that which We reveal to you* (*O Muḥammad*), *and that which We enjoined upon Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and ʿĪsā saying, 'Establish the religion and do not be divided therein.'*"[112] Al-Jurjānī offers a more detailed explanation:

> The substances (*jawāhir*) are the quiddity if it is found in the archetypes … and it is restricted to five things: prime matter (*hayūlā*), form, body, spirit and intellect; these may be absolute or contingent … they may be

110 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 124–125.

111 Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Muʿjam*, 703. It must be mentioned that though Ibn ʿArabī's philosophical outlook is more Aristotelian than Platonic—since he distinguishes between prime matter and form—what Aristotle calls '*hyle*' and '*eidos*' respectively, and agrees with Aristotle that form is inseparable from an existent being, and also attributes causality to these forms—there are still subtle differences between his outlook and Aristotle that are apparent in the section on form (*ṣūra*). (See Aristotle, *Aristotle Metaphysics: Books Z and H*, 72; Jeremy Kirby, *Aristotle's Metaphysics: Form, Matter, and Identity*, 6; 236.)

112 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 43.

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> unattached to a body, and may [instead] be attached to thought and comportment, or they may be attached. The first [i.e. unattached to the body] is the intellect and the second [i.e. attached to the body] is the spirit. … And know that substance (*jawhar*) is applied to spiritual simplexes like absolute intellects and souls, and also to corporeal simplexes like the elements.[113]

The substances (*jawāhir*) are therefore the things from which all existents derive, the unevolved entity from which, as Ibn ʿArabī explains in the chapter of Shuʿayb, prime matter (*hayūlā*) is formed.

Now we may deconstruct Ibn ʿArabī's above statement in which he makes the following points:

– The substance (*jawhar*) is differentiated into prime matter (*hayūla*), among other things.
– This prime matter (*hayūlā*) makes up each form of each existent.
– All the different forms of the existents are part of the same prime matter (*hayūlā*), which is part of the same substance (*jawhar*).

Erecting the dynamic more as representational of a complex relationship than a philosophical certainty—though he must subscribe to it to elevate it as *a priori* truth—Ibn ʿArabī explains that, just as there is only one prime matter (*hayūlā*) derived from the same substance (*jawhar*), provoking innumerable forms in the Cosmos, so there is one divine essence from which all the Names derive, eliciting innumerable existents. This means that though the outcome is multiplicity, its origin is unity. His conclusion is his recapitulation: "Thus, whoever knows himself in this way surely knows his lord, for He created him in His form; rather, he is His *huwiyya* and reality."

Ibn ʿArabī claims that man is the *huwiyya* of the God of the Names, as is evident from his allusion to the Names in the passage as the source of multiplicity. The reason for this, we are told, is that God created man in His form; the form of man, therefore, is the *huwiyya* of God. The perfect synonymy between form and *huwiyya* seems to be here expressed. But it is not as simple as all that, for the mystic expounds that it is only in the sense that the substance (*jawhar*) is the prime matter (*hayūlā*) is the form (*ṣūrā*) that the *huwiyya* is the Names is the form (*ṣūra*). This means the form (*ṣūra*) of man is, in a limited sense, the *huwiyya* (as a term connoting all the Names as a collective) of God, just as the form (*ṣūra*) of all existents in the Cosmos is, in a limited sense, the substance (*jawhar*), as they derive their existence from it. Accordingly, the form (*ṣūra*)

113 Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 83.

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of man is connected to the *huwiyya* of the God of the Names just as the form (*ṣūrā*) of all existents are connected to the substance (*jawhar*).[114] This does not impinge on the ontological antinomy of *huwiyya* and form (*ṣūra*), which appears to be contravened only in the chapter of Hūd, accentuating that the identity between form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya*, while it may occur, occurs infrequently.

Quite common in Ibn ʿArabī's writings, this kind of pseudo-synonymy fosters much ambiguity in the discourse on his work. Another pertinent instance emerges in the chapter of Sulaymān, where the Sufi admonishes:

> Do not be veiled (*tuḥjab*) by the differing ranks and say that the statement of one who says "The creation (*khalq*) is the *huwiyya* of the Truth" is incorrect after I have shown you the differing ranks of the divine Names, which you do not doubt are the Truth.[115]

Defending the proclamation, "The creation (*khalq*) is the *huwiyya* of the Truth," Ibn ʿArabī elucidates that seeing differences in the ranks of people and things should not lead one to question that all creation is the *huwiyya* of God. This is because people and things differ, just as the Names of God differ—some being superior to others.[116] The corresponding manifestations of those Names, then, will naturally differ in superiority.[117]

Huwiyya, as above, is used to denote an aggregate of all the Names, since it is their manifestation that is addressed. Ibn ʿArabī explicates that the creation is the *huwiyya* as they are loci of the manifestation of the Names and, in this sense, they are the same, but that does not detract from their being fundamentally different. The *huwiyya* of the God of the Names is still a symbol of divine unity and the creation still one of multiplicity. They are the same in that the latter derives and emanates from the former, and it is a manifestation of one aspect of it, but they are ontologically distinct. The creation (*khalq*) may therefore be said to be the *huwiyya* in a very restricted and mitigated sense, even if this restriction and mitigation is not readily discernible.

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114 This example highlights the perils of taking Ibn ʿArabī's statements at face value, without providing proper context. The statement, "He created him in His form; rather, he is His *huwiyya* and reality" seemingly bespeaks the perfect synonymy between form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya* when, in actuality, it is far from being so simple.

115 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 154.

116 See Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 99–107.

117 These differences are further compounded by the fidelity, or lack thereof, with which each Name is manifested by its sensible locus.

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3.5 *Summary of* Huwiyya *in the* Fuṣūṣ

Not wishing to tread the path of the more detailed summaries above, we can make some general observations about *huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ*. The most striking feature of Ibn ʿArabī's treatment of *huwiyya* is that it is as detailed as it is abstruse. He approaches the term from different angles and in different ways; at times referring to *huwiyya* as the remote God, at others as the God of the Names, and at others still, by His manifestation as the Cosmos. He details that *huwiyya* may mean one Name as well as all the Names since one Name alludes to other Names, or because all inferior Names are subsumed within a superior one, while also saying that the *huwiyya* is actually part of each Name. He tells us that the manifestation of the Names, the existents, alludes to the divine *huwiyya* but also obfuscates it. He mentions that the loci of the Names *are* the Names, while maintaining that a Name and its locus cannot be the same. The Cosmos is therefore an expression of the *huwiyya* of God, but also "imagined."

Finally, the Perfect Man, in combining in his form all the Names, betrays the multiplicity of the Names, but could also display their unity in the divine *huwiyya*. Framed in such a blunt way, the term seems a collocation of contradictions. But in the context of Ibn ʿArabī's illuminating musings, they make sense. They transcend the basic inconsistencies here highlighted and merge into a cohesive outlook on not just a term, but on God. So it is the context which delivers all the clarification that is needed to rise beyond these paradoxes, context that has been cut short due to necessity. It may, nevertheless, be beneficial to analyze one full chapter to determine how *huwiyya* behaves in its natural habitat. The chapter of Yūsuf seems fit for this purpose.

4 The Chapter of Yūsuf

Walter Scott versifies the trajectory of the random shaft that finds its unexpected mark. While the selection of this chapter cannot but be somewhat random, I prefer to leave as little to chance as possible. This section has been preferred on the twin virtues of frequency and motif. Not only does *huwiyya* feature heavily in it along with many of its synonyms, but Ibn ʿArabī also expounds the shadow metaphor—one of his key concepts apropos of the nature of God. We thus get an idea of how the term *huwiyya* interacts with and fits into Ibn ʿArabī's wider metaphysical lattice.

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4.1 *The Shadow Metaphor*

"Life's but a walking shadow," cries a despondent Macbeth. Never one to toe the line, Ibn ʿArabī sees things the other way around. Not a shadow, but the instantiation of a shadow, the mystic analogizes the Cosmos to the shadow of God:[118]

> No more is known from the Cosmos than is known from shadows, and the Truth is unknown to the same extent that the person casting the shadow is unknown. In terms of it being a shadow of His, it is known, but in terms of what is in the essence (*dhāt*) of the shadow of the person's form who casts it, the Truth is unknown. This is why we say that the Truth is known to us in one sense and unknown to us in another. *Have you not seen how your Lord casts the shadow? If He had willed, He would have made it stationary*, that is, it would be in Him potentially.
>
> He says this: The Truth does not reveal Himself to contingent beings (*mumkināt*) until the shadow is manifested, so it becomes as those contingent beings that are left whose entity (*ʿayn*) has not been manifested in existence. *Then We made the Sun allude to it*, and that is His Name, "the Light," which we have already mentioned, and to which the senses testify, for shadows cannot have an essence without light.
>
> *Then We take it back with ease*. And He only takes it back to Himself as it is His shadow, so it is manifested from Him and to Him is the matter returned in its entirety, as it is He and nothing else. So everything you perceive is the existence of the Truth in the essences of contingent beings. In terms of the *huwiyya* of the Truth, it is His existence, and in terms of the differences of forms in it, it is the essences of contingent beings.[119]

Ibn ʿArabī says that all we know about God is what we know about a person from his shadow; we know only the vague outline of God from the Cosmos as it is only the manifestation of His Names.

Though asserting the Cosmos' inextricable connection to God, this analogy, more fundamentally, enunciates distance from God. The God Ibn ʿArabī refers to here is the unknown, but not the unknowable God; the God we do not know, not the One we *cannot* know. Foregrounding distance from the unknown God, Ibn ʿArabī attributes the lack of definition, form and color of the shadow to the remoteness it has from its subject. He mentions in this very chapter that

118 For al-Qāshānī's view on the shadow metaphor, see Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam*, 33–36.

119 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 102–103.

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mountains seem black and the Sun the size of a shield when viewed from afar; this lack of color and accuracy is due to distance (*buʿd*). But he maintains that the shadow is still ineluctably linked to its subject and its dissociation from it would be absurd.[120] Ibn ʿArabī adverts here to the unknown God after the first differentiation when there is a prefiguring of existence, and not the unknowable God before any such differentiation occurs[121] because the unknowable God is entirely dissociated from creation, whereas after the first differentiation, though God on this rarefied plane may be unknown to all but the gnostics, He is still intimately connected to the Cosmos.[122]

Ibn ʿArabī then explains that the source of the shadow through which we fathom God is the Light of God. "Shadows cannot have an essence without light," he says, and adduces the verse, *Then We made the Sun allude to it*, as proof that God is the light which allows the existence of this shadow, as attested by His Name, "the Light." He concludes that the pronoun in this verse refers to the Light of God as he believes the Qur'an is drawing an analogy between the light of the Sun and how it creates shadows and the Light of God, or, rather, the Light that *is* God, and the shadow He creates: the Cosmos.

"And He only takes it back to Himself as it is His shadow," he continues, "so it is manifested from Him and to Him is the matter returned in its entirety." The

120 Ibid, 102.

121 For a detailed engagement with the "levels" of being with which Ibn ʿArabī's emanationism came to be identified, see Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences."

122 Ibn ʿArabī states that God is known to us in terms of the Cosmos "being a shadow of His." The apparent reading of this passage would indicate that the pronoun refers to God. This tallies well with Ibn ʿArabī's general argument that God may only be known in terms of His Names, which is a vague outline, a shadow of His true self. However, in the following sentence he mentions "a person" (*shakhs*) casting the shadow, after which he returns to God by mentioning that He is unknown. This seems to be a simple case of transition (*iltifāt*) from God to human back to God, a literary tool he frequently employs, but it could also be that Ibn ʿArabī does not intend any such transition (*iltifāt*). Consequently, it would mean that a contingent being is known through its shadow and unknown through it. This would then be a statement vis-à-vis the absolute unknown-ness of God as it states that contingent beings may only be known to an extent, that is, through their shadows, in a vague, formless and monochromatic way, which does not impart anything of their intrinsic nature or essence. God, as in the remote God, on the other hand, cannot be known even in this way as He is known by the shadow cast by the manifestation of His Names that are He but not He. Therefore, the allusion to the physical form by the shadow, which though accurate to a certain degree in its depiction of the human form, is inaccurate when applied to God. The final statement, "He is ignorant of the Truth," according to this reading, would mean that man is ignorant of the Truth in the sense that he does not comprehend even His Names, as he comprehends but the shadow of the Names. The first reading, however, seems more likely.

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shadow of God in the form of the Cosmos is latent inside the divine consciousness before its appearance in the pre-phenomenal and sensible worlds, and on the Day of Judgement, when it is taken back, it resumes its position in Him. Ibn ʿArabī completes this statement with: "as it is He and nothing else." Annunciating that God, viewed in this way, *is* the Cosmos as the latter is nothing save His shadow and the manifestation of His Names. Ibn ʿArabī shortly points out that though this may be categorized as being Him, in one sense, it is not *really* Him in another, for He cannot truly be known at all. Intimately talking to his audience, he sums up:

> So everything you perceive is the existence of the Truth in the essences of contingent beings. In terms of the *huwiyya* of the Truth, it is His existence, and in terms of the differences of forms in it, it is the essences of contingent beings.

Both classes are addressed simultaneously: the gnostic and the layman, the adept and the uninitiated. For the gnostic, it refers to everything he perceives in the pre-sensible as well as physical realms. For the layman, it alludes simply to everything he perceives in this world. The Names of God are existent in all the essences of contingent beings; indeed, it *is* their being. But between the *huwiyya* and the innumerable forms it adopts, a chasm yawns.

Viewed in terms of the *huwiyya*, as a combination of the Names, says Ibn ʿArabī, the existence of the Cosmos, as a whole, is proof of the *huwiyya* as the *huwiyya* is manifested in it. The numerous forms of the Cosmos, nevertheless, when viewed as individual entities, or disparate manifestations of each of the Names, are "essences of contingent beings." This means that the Cosmos is both an expression of the holistic *huwiyya*, when the Cosmos is perceived all at once, and an individualized *huwiyya*, that is, *huwiyya* as an expression of a specific Name,[123] when appreciated on the level of isolated forms in the phenomenal world. Ibn ʿArabī delves deeper into this issue and explains further in the context of God's independence from His creation.

4.2 Huwiyya*, the Independence of God from Creation, and His Oneness*

Before we further agitate the mosaic topsoil of this chapter, a quick aperçu. *Huwiyya* symbolizes two things in this chapter: the absolute existence of God, in terms of His being independent of all contingent beings; and His categor-

123 *Huwiyya* has already been shown above to allude to both all the Names and each individual Name.

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ical oneness, as opposed to the multitudinous forms of the Cosmos. Ibn ʿArabī continues with the shadow metaphor:

> Just as the different forms are always called "a shadow," the different forms [of contingent beings] are always called "the Cosmos" or "other than God." So in terms of its unity as the shadow, it is the Truth, as it is the One, the Only. But in terms of the multitude of forms, it is the Cosmos.[124]

The shadow of God, according to the Andalusian, may be looked at in two ways: as the *huwiyya* of God, His essence as expressed by the Names. In this case, we are viewing the shadow as a single entity, not as the myriad forms it assumes. So we see the entire Cosmos, indeed, all the planes (*ḥaḍarāt*) of existence—which Ibn ʿArabī points out when he says, "other than God"—as a collective shadow. This collective shadow alludes, through its existence, to its originator. Ibn ʿArabī invokes this God when he comments, "So in terms of its unity as the shadow, it is the Truth, as it is the One, the Only." The unity of the shadow is the known God, as expressed by His Names, its existence is His existence. But the shadow can also be appreciated in its individualized forms, and, viewed in this way, it is the Cosmos.

Ibn ʿArabī identifies *huwiyya* with essence (*dhāt*), unity (*aḥadiyya*) and oneness of God. Form (*ṣūra*), on the other hand, is recognized as the multitudinous manifestations of God in the Cosmos. *Huwiyya* thus epitomizes the oneness of God and His transcendence in contradistinction to form (*ṣūra*), which is a term for His multiplicity and immanence.

The *huwiyya* of God in this chapter, perceptibly, is not His remote form but rather the combined essence of His Names, as it is only His Names that can be manifested in the Cosmos. The term "shadow of God" may hence be better articulated as "shadow of the divine Names." And so a contrast between the One, as a collective, and the many, as a differentiation of that collective, or the individual parts of that collective, is erected. Both are the same, the only difference is how they are viewed, all together or separately. Expounding on this issue, Ibn ʿArabī says,

> And if the matter is as I have mentioned to you, then the Cosmos is an illusion, it has no real existence, and this is the meaning of imagination, that is, it seems to you that it is a separate and self-sufficient thing apart from the Truth, but the matter in reality is not so. Do you

124 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 103.

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> not see it [i.e. the shadow], through sense-perception, that it is connected to the person who casts it, it being impossible for it to be separated from that connection just as it is impossible for a thing to be separated from its essence (*dhāt*)? So know your entity (*ʿayn*), and who you are, and what your *huwiyya* is, and what your connection to the Truth is, and in what sense you are the Truth and in what sense you are the Cosmos.[125]

Recapitulating and reinforcing the idea that the Cosmos is nothing save the manifestation of the Names of the known God, Ibn ʿArabī says that from that vantage point, it is an "illusion,"[126] but not in the sense that it does not exist. The mystic does not dispute that the Cosmos is real. His definition of "illusion" is that it is not self-sufficient because it does not exist without God. This is why it, and everything else besides God, is "not real" in the true sense because His existence is the only existence that is not predicated on anything else. This passage thus details what Ibn ʿArabī means by the phrase "an imagined creation (*khalq mutawahham*)."[127] It is not simply the Cosmos being a manifestation of the Names, and as such, just being a locus for them; rather, it is the corollary of this—of not having independent existence, that makes it truly "imagined."

4.3 Huwiyya*, Entity, Essence and Unity*

"So know your entity (*ʿayn*), and who you are, and what your *huwiyya* is," says Ibn ʿArabī, by way of summation. Here, two matters are pressing: are entity (*ʿayn*) and *huwiyya* synonymous, and what relationship do they bear to essence (*dhāt*) in the previous sentence? It seems Ibn ʿArabī uses entity (*ʿayn*) and *huwiyya* to indicate the Names of God that cause the emergence of man in the sensible realm, which is also what essence (*dhāt*) in the previous sentence represents. So all three mean the same thing. From this perspective there appears no difference between the *huwiyya* of man and the *huwiyya* of God mentioned previously in the text because they symbolize the same thing: the assemblage of all the Names of the knowable God.

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125 Ibid.

126 The illusory nature of the world has been hypothesized throughout the philosophical tradition. Philosophers as recent as Bertrand Russell conceded that there was no definitive proof the world was not a dream; our belief that it is not is based on intuition not deliberation. If Ibn ʿArabī is unique, it is not in his postulation of this notion, but in his theologization and redefinition of it.

127 See section on *huwiyya* and belief.

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Yet there is a difference between them inasmuch as *huwiyya*, when applied to God, *is* the Names, but when used for man, it is the *manifestation* of the collection of all the Names. There is another key difference that seethes between them: the *huwiyya* of God refers to everything that subsists in all modalities of existence, whereas, when denoting man, it simply means his status as the comprehensive being (*kawn jāmiʿ*) that embodies all the Names in the sensible world alone.

Whenever Ibn ʿArabī speaks of the entity (*ʿayn*), essence (*dhāt*) and *huwiyya* of man in general terms, he is expressing the emergence of man as the personification of the Names. But this is not the same as manifesting the Names in their purest sense, something that occurs only when a person achieves true gnosis and union with the Names. Only those who achieve this, and in whom this occurs, can claim to truly manifest all the Names—a rank few attain. In this sense, *huwiyya*, when employed by Ibn ʿArabī in a general way, may be seen as the latent embodiment of the Names without their manifestation, or the ultimate potential of man.[128] Expatiating on this idea, Ibn ʿArabī comments, "He who realizes in himself the Truth, manifests the form of the Truth in him[self] to a greater degree than it is manifested in others."[129] So manifestation of the Names means two things for Ibn ʿArabī: (1) the original manifestation that is the creation of man, something all humans have, and (2) the deeper manifestation of the Names that occurs upon attainment of true gnosis, a preserve of the privileged few.

Ibn ʿArabī goes on:

> The only [true] existence of the Truth is [as] God, the Exalted, in terms of His essence (*dhāt*) and entity (*ʿayn*), not in terms of His Names. This is because the Names have two connotations: the first connotation is He is what is named, and the other is that by which this Name is separate and dissociated from another Name. So how can the Forgiving be the Manifest or the Hidden, and how can the First be the Last? It has thus

128 We see how Ibn ʿArabī subverts the concept of potentiality: first, he employs it in the general philosophical sense as the antithesis of actuality, and then he appends the potentiality of man to it once he has already passed into actuality and is phenomenally existent. Moreover, man, once he has realized his true potential, develops a consciousness that his existence is no existence at all since it is only God that is existent and he is nothing but a locus of His manifestation, his reality therefore dissipates which means, according to Ibn ʿArabī, he has simultaneously achieved the perfection (*kamāl*) of his potential (which according to Avicenna is passing into actuality) and reverted into potentiality as a result of it.

129 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 104.

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> become clear for you in what sense every Name is another Name and in what sense it is not. In the sense that it is He, it is the Truth, and in the sense that it is other than He, it is the Imagined Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-mutakhayyal*).[130]

The Andalusian draws a distinction between the essence (*dhāt*) and entity (*ʿayn*) of God, and His Names in this passage. So Ibn ʿArabī first alleges that the divine essence, entity [and *huwiyya*] are the amalgamation of all the Names and then remarks that the divine essence/entity are not the Names. A flagrant contradiction palpitates here. But as with many such cases in Ibn ʿArabī's corpus—and especially in the *Fuṣūṣ*—there is, in fact, no dichotomy because, as the author himself points out, what he means by them not being the Names is the Names as separate manifestations of God in the sensible world. In terms of all the Names as a collective, they are the divine essence, entity (and *huwiyya*).

Ibn ʿArabī underlines this when he says, "So it has become clear for you in what sense each Name is another Name and in what sense it is not another Name."[131] Each Name *is* another Name because they all allude to God, the One, but each Name is also different as it has a separate and distinct manifestation in the pre-phenomenal and phenomenal realms. The Names are His essence, entity and *huwiyya*, if viewed all together, but not His essence, entity or *huwiyya* if viewed separately.

Ibn ʿArabī's logic heretofore is clear: *huwiyya*, essence (*dhāt*) and entity (*ʿayn*) refer to the combination of all the Names and not their individual manifestations in the world. However, he then says:

> So whoever holds on to multiplicity is with the Cosmos and the divine Names and the names of the Cosmos. And whoever holds on to unity (*aḥadiyya*)[132] is with the Truth, in terms of His essence (*dhāt*), which is independent (*ghanī*) of created things. And if He is independent of created things, [He is also] independent of the nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmāʾ*). This is because just as the Names allude to it [i.e. His essence, *dhāt*], they also allude to other named things whose effects they realize.[133]

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

132 Unity (*aḥadiyya*) is generally acknowledged as constituting the first of the "five presences" formalized in the school of Ibn ʿArabī (though the five presences as distinct stages of divine emanation became crystallized much later). See Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," 116.

133 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 104–105.

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Placing multiplicity, divine Names and names of the Cosmos in one hand, Ibn ʿArabī contrasts them with unity (*aḥadiyya*) and essence (*dhāt*) in the other. And given the progressional dynamic between the divine Names and multiplicity—the Names being the cause of multiplicity in the realms—the mystic's reasoning is perspicuous. The names of the Cosmos also clearly belong in this camp as they are the sensible offshoots of the divine Names.

What is less clear is why Ibn ʿArabī has juxtaposed the Names with the essence (*dhāt*) of God, which, as we have just mentioned, are all the Names in combination. The clue lies in the term unity (*aḥadiyya*). Ibn ʿArabī employs it synonymously with essence (*dhāt*), whereas he formerly adopted essence (*dhāt*), entity (*ʿayn*) and *huwiyya* as synonyms. Is essence (*dhāt*) in this equation, then, the same as essence (*dhāt*) in the erstwhile one? The answer is no.

By unambiguously enlisting unity (*aḥadiyya*), Ibn ʿArabī advertises that his purpose here is not to limn the Names as a collective (as opposed to the individual ones), but rather to describe the remote, unknowable God, in contradistinction to the knowable and known God—He who can be and is known through the Names. To dispel any billows of bewilderment that his elastic application of essence (*dhāt*) may have engendered, the Sufi spells out his definition of unity (*aḥadiyya*): a God who is independent of all "nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmāʾ*)" because one cannot apply a name to God that can also be used for created beings. This leaves us with no way to articulate the remote God and, consequently, no way to fathom Him, for if He is beyond anything we can say about Him, how can we know Him? As ʿAfīfī remarks, "To know in this sense is to determine that which is known, and determination is a form of limitation which is contrary to the nature of the Absolute."[134] In short, Ibn ʿArabī suggests that we simply do not possess the consciousness to process the concept of the Absolute God on this most rarefied plane.

The conscription of unity (*aḥadiyya*) and essence (*dhāt*) to designate the unknowable God is heralded by the phrase "the Imagined Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-mutakhayyal*)" in the previous passage, where Ibn ʿArabī states that, in terms of the Names not being God, they allude to God's status and an Imagined God, a God that is imagined in the consciousness of man through the Names, and the implications of those Names, which, in reality, could never be applied to the unknowable God in any meaningful way. This raises the question: if essence (*dhāt*) may be used to denote the unknowable God as well as the One expressed

134 ʿAfīfī, "Ibn ʿArabī," 411. Put infinitely, and predictably, more epigrammatically by Wilde: "To define is to limit." And the remote God is far beyond such limitation.

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by the Names, can entity (*ʿayn*) also join the party? Ibn ʿArabī seeks the aid of chapter 112 of the Qur'an to answer this:

> *Say God is One*, in terms of His entity (*ʿayn*). *God is eternal*, in terms of our dependence on Him. *He did not beget*, us, in terms of His *huwiyya*; *nor was He begotten*, in like manner; *nor is anyone equal to Him*, in like manner.[135]

Significantly, the Sufi proffers this exegesis as an explanation and proof of the remote, unknowable God. He discloses that God in His purest form is beyond all "nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmāʾ*)" and therefore supra-rational, and adduces this chapter as proof of that.

"*Say God is One*, in terms of His entity (*ʿayn*)," he begins. The answer to our question as to whether entity (*ʿayn*) may be used to signify the unknowable God is provided forthwith, for here Ibn ʿArabī conjures it categorically to do just that. He continues, "*He did not beget*, us, in terms of His *huwiyya*." The original denotation of *huwiyya*, the Absolute in His Absoluteness, is invoked. He did not beget anything, including us, says the Andalusian. Nothing in any of the planes of existence is a manifestation or representation of His in this pure sense as He surpasses all such connections and categorizations.

Let us take stock. Ibn ʿArabī uses these three terms not only to refer to the collective entity that is all the Names—the manner in which we, as a creation, can know and do know God—but also to express God in His truest form before any differentiations, God as the Absolute who transcends all nominal and conceptual connections. Lest there be any doubt as to the interchangeability of all three terms, he also uses the last of them, essence (*dhāt*), in his commentary of chapter 112 when he writes, "So this is His description and He singles out His essence (*dhāt*) by saying, *God is One*." Ibn ʿArabī therefore uses essence (*dhāt*) and entity (*ʿayn*) in his commentary of the same verse, and *huwiyya* in the commentary of a verse that corroborates it.

If the adduction of the exegesis of chapter 112 serves one purpose, it is to assert the unqualified remoteness of God. Yet Ibn ʿArabī's next statement casts doubt on this postulate, for immediately after proclaiming, "He singles out His essence (*dhāt*) by saying, *God is One*," he remarks, "while the multiplicity known to us is manifest in His attributes."[136] This suggests that Ibn ʿArabī has reverted to drafting essence (*dhāt*) to connote the combination of all the Names, as opposed to the multiplicity (*kathra*) expressed by the Names in their individual

135 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 105.
136 Ibid.

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manifestations in the sensible world. Affording further credence to this assertion is Ibn ʿArabī's use of the same noun in singular and plural forms (*naʿt* and *nuʿūt*) to signify God's singular attribute, as an amalgamation of all the Names, and His multitudinous attributes that give rise to the multiplicity (*kathra*) in the physical world, respectively. So to which God is Ibn ʿArabī referring: the unknowable One, the knowable and known God, or all of the above?

Ibn ʿArabī's extended commentary of chapter 112, which shortly follows his isagogic treatment, offers few hints:

> So we beget and are begotten, and we depend on Him, and we are equal to one another [as humans]. But this One [being] is free from these attributes, for He is independent of them just as He is independent of us. And the Truth does not have a lineage/origin except [as expressed in] this *sūra, sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*, as it was revealed for this purpose.[137]

The pliable diction could refer to the unknowable and the knowable and known God. "So we beget and are begotten," says Ibn ʿArabī, "and we depend on Him, and we are equal to one another [as humans]." More commonly reserved for the description of the knowable and known God, this sentence still functions for the unknowable. He goes on: "this One [being] is free from these attributes." This is largely reminiscent of his previous remark about God being "independent of the nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmāʾ*)," a reference to the unknowable God. But he concludes with, "just as He is independent of us," again, an amphibolous expression, though predominantly recruited to introduce the knowable and known God. Wrapping up, Ibn ʿArabī reveals that this is the truest description of the lineage (*nasab*) of God, which is why he selected this chapter to express the nature of God. This is an allusion to the context of revelation (*shaʾn al-nuzūl*) for this chapter, with which Ibn ʿArabī is clearly familiar.[138]

Not a little disorienting, the analysis of chapter 112 begins by demonstrating the remoteness of the Absolute God who cannot be fathomed as he is beyond all "nominal connections," and ends it with ascriptions and designations that are *de rigueur* for the collective entity of all the Names against their individual manifestations in the world. So what to make of all this? Which conception of God does Ibn ʿArabī mean? Atypically, the Sufi takes it upon himself to dispel the brume of bemusement; he writes,

137 Ibid.

138 For a detailed report of the context of revelation of chapter 112, see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 12:740–741.

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> The unity (*aḥadiyya*) of God, in terms of the divine Names which require us, is a unity of multiplicity (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*). Whereas, the unity of God (*aḥadiyyat Allāh*), in terms of His independence from us and the Names is a unity of essence (*aḥadiyyat al-ʿayn*). To both the Name "the One" (*al-Wāḥid*) is applied, so remember this.[139]

Ibn ʿArabī's acknowledgement of the perplexity his treatment of the nature of God thus far may have fostered is all the more remarkable for being so unequivocal. Seldom bestowing such benevolence upon his audience, the Sufi's munificence is with good reason. Ibn ʿArabī has used the same three terms (essence, *dhāt*; entity, *ʿayn*; and *huwiyya*) and the same chapter of the Qurʾan to denote the unknowable God and the knowable and known God. He has vacillated in his analysis between the different conceptions. Here, in a rare fit of explaining himself, he invokes the term "the unity of God" (*aḥadiyyat Allāh*), which is a term he usually retains for the unknowable God.

Ibn ʿArabī elucidates that the unity of God can be a "unity of multiplicity" (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*),[140] by which he means a unity of all the Names, the knowable and known God. He wields the phrase, "The divine Names which require us," as it is through the Perfect Man that the divine Names may be manifested as a collective entity in the sensible world. The reference, then, is certainly to the knowable and known God. This God Ibn ʿArabī juxtaposes with the "unity of essence" (*aḥadiyyat al-ʿayn*), by which he refers to the unknowable God.[141]

He writes that the unity of essence (*aḥadiyyat al-ʿayn*) is God's independence of us and the Names. Appending "the Names" as God's independence of us could still be a suitable description of the knowable God. Ibn ʿArabī categorically claims that this is the God who transcends all nominal and conceptual relations and is unequivocally unknowable. Thus Ibn ʿArabī answers the question as to which God he refers to by *huwiyya*, entity (*ʿayn*) and essence (*dhāt*): it is all conceptions of Him. He slips and slides between conceptions, employing

139 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 105.

140 Al-Jurjānī defines *aḥadiyyat al-kathra* as, "The One in which the relative multiplicity becomes intelligible." (Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb*, 11.) This clearly refers to the known God as He is intelligible to the creation, which is the way in which Ibn ʿArabī employs it here.

141 Al-Jurjānī defines *aḥadiyyat al-ʿayn* as, "The way in which He is independent of us and the Names," which coincides with Ibn ʿArabī's usage here in delineating the remote God. (Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb*, 12.) *Aḥadiyya*, it must be mentioned in passing, is the term Ibn ʿArabī usually reserves for the unknowable God. But he needed a term that could connote both conceptions of God, and *aḥadiyya* is the only term he almost exclusively uses for the Absolute in His Absoluteness. He therefore, in my opinion, decided to expand it to incorporate both conceptions of God.

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the same three terms, and it is the free exchange between them that engenders such bewilderment, which he not only recognizes, but also resolves.

4.4 Huwiyya *and the Knowable God*

After floodlighting all the important issues, the chapter of Yūsuf is bookended by Ibn ʿArabī with the following passage:

> Without doubt the Cosmos is essentially in need of causes. The greatest of causes for it is the causality of the Truth. And there is no causality of the Truth that the Cosmos is in need of save the divine Names. The Cosmos needs every Name of the divine Names from a Cosmos like it or the entity (*ʿayn*) of the Truth, for it is God, no other. This is why He says, *O people, you are in need of God while God is the Independent, the Praised*.[142] And it is known that we are in need of one another, so our names are the Names of God, the Exalted, since, without doubt, everything is in need of Him. But our entities (*aʿyān*), at the same time, are His shadow, no other. So He is our *huwiyya* and not our *huwiyya*.[143]

More than just a summation of the main points raised in this chapter, this passage is continued clarification of a concept prefaced in the previous paragraph. Ibn ʿArabī explains the emergence of the Cosmos and, indeed, all modalities of existence, by focussing almost exclusively on the knowable God as the collective of all the Names, and His relationship to the Cosmos.

To comprehend why Ibn ʿArabī seeks to reinforce this point, we must first grasp what the concept of the unknowable God entails. Ibn ʿArabī, in his analysis of the unknowable, remote God, maintains that He is utterly independent of everything and everyone; He has absolutely no need of anything, and nothing can even fathom Him. A necessary corollary of this assertion is to call into question the need for the emergence of the Cosmos. If God, on this absolute level, is completely incomprehensible, then what is the purpose of creating a Cosmos that can never truly reflect His image? It is this question that Ibn ʿArabī answers with the proclamation:

> Without doubt the Cosmos is essentially in need of causes. The greatest of causes for it is the causality of the Truth. And there is no causality of the Truth that the Cosmos is in need of save the divine Names.

142 Qur'an, 35:15.

143 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 105–106.

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In other words, it is not this unknowable God who seeks His image to be reflected in the Cosmos because it is impossible for any creation to achieve this; the purpose of the creation of the Cosmos is to reflect the divine Names, and through them, the *knowable* God. This is the "greatest cause" for the emergence of the Cosmos.

Consolidating that the cause of the Cosmos is the Names, and moving to delineate the mechanics, Ibn ʿArabī writes, "The Cosmos needs every Name of the divine Names from a Cosmos like it or the entity (*ʿayn*) of the Truth, for it is God, no other." The emergence of the phenomenal realm is not a one-step process, says the Sufi, because the sensible Cosmos, which requires each and every Name, comes into being when the Names are manifested in the pre-phenomenal realm or "a Cosmos like it," and then into the material one. Though the most common pathway, the pre-sensible manifestation, is not a prerequisite, as Ibn ʿArabī's statement, "or the entity (*ʿayn*) of the Truth," intimates. Perspicuously, entity (*ʿayn*) here refers to the combination of all the Names that is the essence of the knowable God.

Ibn ʿArabī articulates that the emergence of the Cosmos may come about through two routes: the first begins with a Name that is manifested in the pre-sensible world and then the physical one. The second moves directly into phenomenality, bypassing the pre-sensible realm. In this sense, it is "the entity (*ʿayn*) of the Truth" which appears in the material world and does not require another Cosmos like it to make the leap from the essence to the sensible world. Either way, its dependence on a Name is absolute, which is why Ibn ʿArabī says, "It is God, no other."

Recapitulating his entire outlook towards the complex God-man relationship, Ibn ʿArabī closes with, "We need each other,"[144] which means that we are mutually dependent because just as we require God for our existence, the knowable and known God needs us for His manifestation as "His Names are our names,"[145] meaning His Names are manifested through us. This also suggests that our names, as in the manner in which we name and articulate things in order to describe them, comprehend them and forge relationships with them, are applicable to Him. We thus describe Him in the same way and with the same names as we do ourselves; this is why "His Names are our names."[146]

144 Ibid., 106.

145 Ibid.

146 The concept of describing things from a narrow frame of reference is something that Ibn ʿArabī derives from the Qur'an. We are told about the inhabitants of paradise: *Every time they are given fruits therefrom they say, "This is what we have been given before."* (Qur'an, 2:25.) Al-Ṭabarī, in his commentary of this verse, asks rhetorically, "Is it not permissible

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Conspicuously, Ibn ʿArabī completes this thought with the phrase, "as everything is dependent on Him,"[147] when, not a few lines ago, he avowed the mutualism between the Names and the Cosmos. Moreover, the verse he adduces as proof of this symbiosis asserts only God's independence from everything and the Cosmos' dependence on Him. So why does Ibn ʿArabī believe this verse corroborates his contention about the God-man mutualism? And why does he begin his remarks by solely affirming the Cosmos' reliance on the Names, proffering a verse that substantiates it, only to interpret it as symbiosis, and then conclude his remarks by again asserting God's independence? The reason for this rather schizophrenic analysis is given by his statement: "But our essences are, at the same time, His shadow,"[148] for what Ibn ʿArabī suggests here is a complex mutualism. It is not a simple case of the knowable God requiring the Cosmos for His manifestation and the Cosmos needing the Names for its existence in equal measure. No, the Cosmos requires the Names far more than the Names need the Cosmos, as this Cosmos is only one of an infinite number which could manifest His Names. Ibn ʿArabī intimates this by the phrase "a Cosmos like it," which could refer to a pre-phenomenal realm of existence or another sensible one.

Finally, by stating that our essences are His shadow, Ibn ʿArabī makes clear that man, though he is the most focussed manifestation of the divine Names, is still but a vague adumbration of the knowable divine essence. It is in this regard that we are His *huwiyya* and He is ours, but this must not lead us to think

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that the names of that which is in paradise, in terms of fruits, foods and drinks, should be like their names in the world? So if one denies that, then he disagrees with the text of the Book of God, for God, exalted be His praise, made His servants know what is with Him in paradise through names that they were given in the world." (Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, 1:210–211.) Al-Ṭabarī acknowledges that the same names may be applied to entirely different things due to a limited scope of reference. Here, the fruits of paradise are given the same names by its inhabitants because all they know are the names they have been taught in the world. Indeed, al-Ṭabarī argues that the *reason* these names are given to them in the world are so that they can employ them in paradise. Ibn ʿArabī, likewise, states that the names we use to describe God are also applied to other things that are part of the creation. The reason for this is we cannot describe Him with names that are outside our frame of reference, we can only describe Him with what we know, even if the connotation when applied to Him is entirely different. In asserting this, Ibn ʿArabī is in lockstep with a contemporary, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), (and in opposition to Duns Scotus, d. 1308) who also upheld that though the same words may be applied to God and man, a distinct meaning in each case is implied.

147 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 106.

148 Ibid.

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the relationship is evenly balanced; our dependence on Him is far greater. He is our *huwiyya* far more than we are His *huwiyya* because His Names are the absolute cause of our existence, and our existence is but a blurred reflection of His Names.

4.5 *Summary of* Huwiyya *in the Chapter of Yūsuf*

Ibn ʿArabī uses the context of the story of Yūsuf to elucidate the concept of *huwiyya* in all its nuance and complexity. He aims to dispel any confusion caused by his use of the term to denote both the unknowable God, the God that remains forever beyond the ken of human comprehension, and the God that is "imagined" by the creation through a holistic engagement with the Names. *Huwiyya* may signify the essence of the divine in each case, but the meaning is very different. Indeed, the difference in connotations may be perceived as an evolution of the true meaning of *huwiyya*, which has the primary acceptation of the absolutely unknowable God with whom the creation engages by the nominal *huwiyya*, a *huwiyya* that makes God intelligible but can never be a true representation of Him. This nominal *huwiyya* is connected to the creational *huwiyya* as it is a manifestation of the nominal *huwiyya*, either in its entirety, in the case of the Perfect Man who embodies all the divine Names, or a single Name, in the case of other existents. All the *huwiyyāt*, then, are connected in an evolutionary process beginning with the *huwiyya* of the unknowable God and ending with the *huwiyya* of existents.

5 Conclusion of Ibn ʿArabī and *Huwiyya*

Intricate and multifaceted, the term *huwiyya*, in Ibn ʿArabī's conceptual outlook, goes to the very heart of the nature of God and, as such, may be conceived of as the highest "focus-word,"[149] with everything originating from and returning to it. Specifically, in the context of Ibn ʿArabī's emanationism, it is even more significant as the entire universe, indeed, all modalities of existence, are an expression of God—of His *huwiyya*, while it is also a term for Him alone, as an incomprehensible, categorically independent, solely existent being. Impossibly broad, it covers everything and God alone. Being at once so broad and so narrow, it is little wonder that *huwiyya* is the source of such confusion in Ibn ʿArabī's corpus. However, Ibn ʿArabī, in acknowledgement of the

149 See Izutsu, *God and Man*, 100–117.

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ambiguity fostered by this term and the significance of it, deigns to explicate what he means when he employs it (most of the time). We need only look closely.

Our sojourn with the master thus concluded, let us see if all the nuances of meaning are preserved by ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, or whether he alters and adapts the term in accordance with his own spiritual insight and in response to the exigencies of his era.

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CHAPTER 3

Al-Qāshānī and *Huwiyya*

1 Al-Qāshānī's Definition of *Huwiyya*

Learning to fly, counsels Nietzsche, must be preceded by learning to stand, and walk, and run, and climb, and dance. It is folly to think one could fly into flying. Thinking one can fly into a contrastive analysis of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī is equivalently imprudent. Accordingly, in this section, al-Qāshānī's treatment of *huwiyya* will be dealt with on its own terms without reference to or comparison with that of Ibn ʿArabī's. This, at least, is the objective; naturally, one cannot escape the siren call of Ibn ʿArabī entirely, so steeped is al-Qāshānī's engagement in his master's semantic *Weltanshauung*. The attempt, nevertheless, will be to try and avoid it as much as possible so that al-Qāshānī's own conception of what this term means will emerge before it is analyzed with that of his Sufi forebear.

To explore what al-Qāshānī means by *huwiyya*, we must proceed from his definition of the term in his various lexicons. The term is conspicuously absent from his *Iṣṭilaḥāt* and we are given only a brief definition in *Rashḥ al-zulāl*, wherein he writes that *huwiyya* is "the absolute, comprehensive Reality … in the absolute unseen … for the absolute unseen, in terms of it being unseen, does not reach a point where it is ever witnessed."[1]

This succinct definition furnishes us with our point of departure vis-à-vis al-Qāshānī's conceptualization of *huwiyya*: it is the absoluteness of God; God in a rarefied plane of existence, a plane that never enters the realms of sensory perception—in this way it is severed from the creation and its manifestation therein. However, God may be characterized as this in the first and second planes of existence, that is, in the plane when there is nothing and manifestation of God is not even presaged, the absolute form of God about which man cannot know anything; and the second plane, when there is a foreshadowing of creation and, thus, a prefiguring of manifesting the divine Names—the purpose for creation. To find out which al-Qāshānī means, we can look at his definitions of *huwiyya* in the *Laṭāʾif*.

Al-Qāshānī presents numerous definitions of the different types of *huwiyya* in the *Laṭāʾif*, all the better for our understanding of what exactly he means by

1 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.

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them. His most elementary definition corresponds well with what is written in *Rashḥ*. He comments that *huwiyya* is, "The Reality in the unseen realm, and the *huwiyya* of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) is in terms of its entity (*ʿayn*)."[2] Doing little to identify the plane of existence to which al-Qāshānī refers, this definition does, nonetheless, reveal an indelible link between this term, [divine] essence (*dhāt*) and entity (*ʿayn*).[3]

Two more definitions ensue in the *Laṭāʾif*; broadly synonymic, the first of these is "the great *huwiyya*" (*al-huwiyyat al-kubrā*), about which al-Qāshānī remarks, "it is the Reality of realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqāʾiq*) and it is the *huwiyya* encompassing all the *huwiyyāt*."[4] The plane of existence still unidentitfied, we are, however, told that in the opinion of al-Qāshānī, as in the opinion of Ibn ʿArabī, things other than God have a *huwiyya*. The second definition, "the all-encompassing *huwiyya*" (*al-huwiyyat al-muḥīta*), is largely a recapitulation of the former, included, it would seem, for mere scrupulousness:

> It is the *huwiyya* encompassing all the *huwiyyāt*, and it is the Reality of realities, which you know, as it is the inner aspect of the oneness (*waḥda*), from the provident care (*ḥīṭa*) of which, nothing leaves.[5]

Apprising us not only that things other than God have a *huwiyya*, but that *all* things have a *huwiyya*, this definition announces, too, that they are all under the control of the divine *huwiyya*.

The various categorizations of *huwiyya* supplied by al-Qāshānī in his lexicons have thus furnished us with three fundamental points from which we can begin our investigation: (1) *Huwiyya* refers to the unknown-ness of God, though on what plane we do not know, (2) the terms entity (*ʿayn*) and *huwiyya* may be used interchangeably as they are by Ibn ʿArabī, and (3) everything has a *huwiyya*.

2 *Huwiyya*, Entity and the Perfect Man

The next step, having established a link between *huwiyya* and the term entity (*ʿayn*), would be to prod and probe the latter. In the *Laṭāʾif*, al-Qāshānī defines the "entity of the Truth" (*ʿayn al-Ḥaqq*) as:

2 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 697.

3 These are the very terms with which Ibn ʿArabī identifies *huwiyya*. For more on this, see the comparative analysis of *huwiyya*.

4 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 697.

5 Ibid.

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> The man who has realized the great intermediary manifestation (*al-maẓhariyya al-barzakhiyya al-kubrā*),[6] as you know. By it is also meant he who realizes the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer"[7] … and he who attains this station sees God in everything. This is only due to his realization of the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer." … And this man is called the servant of the Seer (*ʿAbd al-Baṣīr*) due to realizing the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer," be He exalted and sanctified.[8]

Here al-Qāshānī constructs the syllogism:

> if *huwiyya* = entity (*ʿayn*),
> and entity (*ʿayn*) = someone who has realized the great intermediary manifestation (*al-maẓhariyya al-barzakhiyya al-kubrā*),
> then *huwiyya* = someone who has realized the great intermediary manifestation.

A man who has realized the great intermediary manifestation is one who has the capacity to act as an intermediary between God and the creation. In other words, his existence is a conduit for expression of the Names that are manifested in their individualized forms in the Cosmos. This man is more commonly known as the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).[9] We find confirmation of this in the *Iṣṭilaḥāt* where the essence of the Truth and the Cosmos is defined as:

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6 This term has special significance in Ibn ʿArabī's terminology. Suʿād Ḥakīm writes that by it Ibn ʿArabī "refers to the reality of man (*ḥaqīqat al-insān*), which, through its essence (*dhāt*), combines the two forms (*ṣūratayn*): the Truth and the creation. So it is two copies with two connections: a connection with which it enters the divine plane (*al-haḍra al-ilāhiyya*), and a connection with which it enters the creational plane (*al-ḥaḍra al-kawniyya*). It is thus the intermediary (*barzakh*) between the Cosmos and the Truth, and it is the rank of the Perfect Man." (Suʿād Ḥakīm, *Al-Muʿjam*, 194.) For al-Qāshānī, the term intermediary (*barzakh*) is clearly significant. He states that it is "something that comes in between two things and forms a partition between them." (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 231.) However, when applied to man—an exteriorization of all the divine Names—his multiplicity (*kathra*) is the "connection between the real oneness (*al-waḥda al-ḥaqīqiyya*) of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) and the real multiplicity (*al-kathara al-ḥaqīqiyya*), which are the forms (*ṣuwar*) of the existents." (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 234.) For a detailed engagement of all the denotations of intermediary (*barzakh*), see Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 231–234.

7 Al-Qāshānī evidently uses *ʿayn* to refer to both "entity" and "eye," as attested by his continual reference to sight and seeing in this and other definitions. However, I prefer to translate the term as entity as I believe it captures the overarching meaning of *ʿayn* in al-Qāshānī's various works.

8 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 536.

9 The major work on the concept of the Perfect Man is by al-Jīlī, see *Al-Insān al-kāmil*.

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> The Perfect Man who has realized the great intermediary Reality. This is because God sees the Cosmos through his sight and thus bestows upon it the mercy of existence. As He said, "But for you [O Muḥammad!] I would not have created the heavens." And he is the man who realizes the Name, "the Seer" (*al-Baṣīr*) because everything that he sees in the Cosmos of things he sees by this Name.[10]

The reason the Perfect Man is the great intermediary between God and His creation, explains al-Qāshānī, is that he is the reason for it. The Cosmos came into being only because God wanted to see an expression of all His Names, a function the Perfect Man fulfilled. Al-Qāshānī is most unequivocal on this point in his definition of the entity of the Cosmos (*ʿayn al-ʿālam*):

> It is the essence of the Truth, for he is only the entity of the Truth due to his realization of the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer," so likewise, he is the entity of the Cosmos as there is no seer without the Name, "the Seer," be He exalted and sanctified. And the Shaykh [i.e. Ibn ʿArabī] said in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, "Man is only the entity of the Truth because the Exalted saw the Cosmos through him and thus had mercy upon it, meaning, by pouring forth existence upon it because of him." Since, but for the Perfect Man, He would not have created the Cosmos, as alluded to by His saying, "But for you, I would not have created the heavens." And His, be He exalted, saying, "*And He has subjugated to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the Earth*." To summarize what he [i.e. Ibn ʿArabī] said in the *Fuṣūṣ*, "Man is only the entity of the Cosmos because he is the essential aim of the Cosmos."[11]

The Perfect Man is the entity (*ʿayn*) and *huwiyya* of God because he realizes the Name, "the Seer," which here means all the Names, as all the Names are viewed through it. This also, at least in part, reveals what al-Qāshānī means by "the absolute, unseen Reality," for the Perfect Man can only be an expression of the Names after there is a prefiguring of pouring forth existence; *huwiyya*, then, means the communicable essence of God, as we cannot fathom, let alone articulate, what the Absolute in His Absoluteness is. In this regard, al-Qāshānī imitates Ibn ʿArabī who also holds that if something can be named, it is knowable to an extent. So *huwiyya* is the unknown, but not the absolutely unknowable

10 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilaḥāt*, 151.
11 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 536–537.

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God,[12] and this unknown-ness does not derogate from its communicability, for something may be unknown yet still be communicated, and such is the case of the divine *huwiyya*.

Having gained a basic idea of what al-Qāshānī means by *huwiyya*, let us now see how he deploys it in his exegetical work, *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*.

3 *Huwiyya* in the *Taʾwīlāt*

3.1 *Absolute Existence versus Contingent Existence*[13]

The basic tools thus acquired, we may now undertake a semantic surgery of *huwiyya* in the *Taʾwīlāt*. A blueprint of what al-Qāshānī means by the term has been sketched out by his lexicons; what remains to be seen is whether his application of it is faithful to his definitions.

Al-Qāshānī begins his commentary of chapter 45:

> *Ḥā Mīm*.[14] This is the statement following the oath that is omitted by virtue of the Book being revealed to him, that is, "I swear by the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*), that is, absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), which is the source of everything and the essence of union (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*), and by Muḥammad, that is, relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), which is the perfection of everything and a differentiated form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*), that I will surely reveal the Book that will make these two things apparent."[15]

The most basic and most succinct definition of *huwiyya* to be found anywhere in the *Taʾwīlāt* is here elaborated. Al-Qāshānī characterizes it as the "absolute existence" (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) of God as opposed to the relational existence

12 Al-Qāshānī, unlike some others in the school of Ibn ʿArabī, classifies the presence the unknowable God as a distinctly separate "presence" (*ḥaḍra*) to that of the unknown God, or the "Second Entification." Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," 122.

13 For an analysis of how absolute and contingent existence operate in the emanatory scheme of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, see Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," 115.

14 Al-Qāshānī takes *ḥāʾ* to denote *ḥaqīqa* (reality), as in the absolute reality, and *mīm* to denote Muḥammad. This is why he chooses to delineate the difference between absolute and relational existence here, as he sees Muḥammad as the epitome of relational existence. For a detailed engagement with al-Qāshānī's interpretation of "the isolated letters" (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿāt*), see Michel Vâlsan, *Les interprétations ésotériques du Coran*, 100–101, 110–111.

15 Al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 2:545.

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(*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*) of His creation. *Huwiyya*, though used for other things and in other instances, first and fundamentally means this: it is God's absolute existence, the one red line that distinguishes Him from everything else. All other definitions and uses of *huwiyya* emanate from this primary one, just as all existence emanates from God Himself. It is precisely because there are so many uses and definitions of *huwiyya* that al-Qāshānī seeks to underscore the primariness of this one by saying that it is "the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*)." In other words, this is the main *huwiyya* and source of all *huwiyyāt*. Though consonant with the definitions we have hitherto encountered in al-Qāshānī's lexicons, we were not, heretofore, directed to think of it in terms of God's absolute existence.

The commentary of this verse also demonstrates that *huwiyya* denotes the absolute essence of God, but not in the sense of God before there was any foreshadowing of existence, rather of God as the unified source of all existence. This represents a significant departure from Ibn ʿArabī's most basic signification of *huwiyya*. For though the disciple is in lockstep with the master in asserting that the main connotation of the term is the unknowable God, as we shall see, al-Qāshānī enlists it here to convey the second emanatory stage of the divine in which a portending of existence occurs. God is still alone and unknown, as there is nothing besides Him, and He is dissociated from His creation, in a sense, as there is nothing but He. But He is no longer absolutely alone and unknowable due to the prefiguring of creation within the divine consciousness—a prefiguring that connects Him to the creation that will be.

Al-Qāshānī clearly draws a distinction between God, the absolutely existent, and the Perfect Man, that is, Muḥammad, the contingently so, the one who is the differentiated form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*) of all the Names. Only in the commentary of one other verse does al-Qāshānī articulate this distinction between the absolute *huwiyya* of God and His creation in a similar way:

> *Alif Lām Rā … these*, that is, what is alluded to by these letters are the fundamentals of the entire, wisdom-filled book, or the [book whose] completeness of differentiations are masterly and perfect. Or I swear by God, in terms of the *huwiyya* of unity (*al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*) generally, and in terms of the attribute of oneness (*al-ṣifa al-wāḥidiyya*) in particular.[16]

Congruous conceptually as well as structurally, elucidating the sundry actualities of God, and doing so in the explicative service of the individual letters

16 Ibid. 1:232.

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(*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿāt*), the two commentaries, nevertheless, part ways terminologically. To begin with, in place of the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*) that has absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) and the creation which has relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), we are acquainted with the designation: the *huwiyya* of unity (*al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*), in contradistinction to the attribute of oneness (*al-ṣifa al-wāḥidiyya*). If these commentaries are to concur, these terms must likewise concur. We commence with the putative cognate of the reality of *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*), the *huwiyya* of unity (*al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*).

3.2 Huwiyya *and Unity*

Habitually fastidious in the exposition of his nomenclature, al-Qāshānī's engagement with the concept of unity (*aḥadiyya*) in his lexicons is yet more comprehensive. Unsurprisingly, the most concise definition is delivered in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, where al-Qāshanī describes unity (*aḥadiyya*) as, "its consideration while discarding everything [else]."[17] This would seem to be an allusion to God in His absolute state where He cannot be considered in reference to anything else as everything is unified in Him or because there is no foreshadowing of existence.

Al-Qāshānī's definition of the unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*) affords us a more detailed definition. He writes that it is "its consideration just as it is, without discarding or confirming it, such that the aforementioned relationship of the plane of oneness (*haḍrat al-wāḥidiyya*) is included in it."[18] This means that oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) is included in unity (*aḥadiyya*) because the former emanates from the latter. But what of unity (*aḥadiyya*) itself? Al-Qāshānī creates an elaborate profile of this term, from its basic meaning, progressing through its ever more differentiated forms, and culminating in the unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*) in the *Laṭāʾif*. The basic meaning of unity (*aḥadiyya*), says al-Qāshānī, is:

> Consideration of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) in terms of there primarily not being a connection between it and anything else, nor there primarily being a connection between something and the [divine] essence (*dhāt*). This is why consideration of something that is described by unity (*aḥadiyya*) necessitates the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) to be independent of the world because, from this standpoint, there is no connection between

17 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 51.
18 Ibid.

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> it and anything else, and from this point of view, a thing called unity (*aḥadiyya*) necessitates that the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) does not reach [it], nor does it reach [the divine essence, *dhāt*], or encompass it in any way, as it cannot be considered in terms of anything. And this is the [only] consideration by which the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) is called "unified," as you know.[19]

This definition correlates perfectly with the commentary of chapter 45 where the *huwiyya* of God is described as having absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) and everything else as having relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*). Therefore, from this vantage point, there cannot be any relationship between God and His creation as their existential realities are of diametrically opposite kinds. This is also what al-Qāshānī means when he remarks that primarily there is no connection between the unity (*aḥadiyya*), or basic *huwiyya* of God, and anything else. It could also refer to the absolute incomprehensibility of God—of His being entirely dissociated from His creation as they cannot even fathom Him, let alone forge a relationship with Him. But the allusion above of the oneness (*waḥidiyya*) being contained within the unity (*aḥadiyya*) would suggest that the first meaning is more dominant.

Another denotation, as stated previously, is that since everything is unified in God in this plane of existence, there cannot be any connection to anything else as nothing else exists yet. We note also that essence (*dhāt*) and unity (*aḥadiyya*) are used synonymously in a context where unity (*aḥadiyya*) denotes *huwiyya*. This is corroborated by al-Qāshānī's definition of essential unity (*al-aḥadiyya al-dhātiyya*), which is a recapitulation of this definition. He writes:

> It is what you know of it in terms of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) not having primarily any connection to anything, nor anything having a connection to it in a certain way. And the [divine] essence (*dhāt*), in terms of this unity (*aḥadiyya*), necessitates independence from the worlds.[20]

So far, there is either no differentiation (which is less likely, as stated above) or differentiation of existence is anticipated in the unity (*aḥadiyya*) of God. The two terms—*huwiyya* and unity (*aḥadiyya*)—operate synonymously, each employed to delineate the absolute essence of God. This also means that the default designation of unity (*aḥadiyya*), if deployed in isolation, is this one

19 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 152.
20 Ibid.

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because if a different meaning is intended, al-Qāshānī will further qualify it with one of the following terms:

1. Unity of the Attributes (*al-aḥadiyya al-ṣifatiyya*). Through this, according to al-Qāshānī, "there are considerations of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*), in terms of union of the Names and the attributes in it … and this consideration unites the different kinds of Names, while every Name alludes to it. Also, if one meaning is understood from it, another of the Names is distinct from it."[21]

   This term seems closely allied to oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) as we observe from al-Qāshānī's near exact definition in the *Iṣṭilaḥāt*, wherein he writes that oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) is: "Consideration of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) in terms of the Names emanating from it, and its oneness being with it despite its multiplicity with the Names."[22] In the *Laṭā'if*, as ever, he is more generous, but the central premise of oneness (*wāḥdiyya*), meaning the oneness of the Names, remains. Al-Qāshānī comments that it is:

   > Consideration of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) in terms of the Names emanating from it and its unity with them. So the Name of the [divine] being "the One" is positive, not negative because the oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) is the source of the emanation of the Names from the [divine] being since the Names are disparate connections to the one [divine] being in reality; and upon this oneness, gnosis depends, and to it the search is directed.[23]

   The principal distinction between this term and the aforementioned two, therefore, is that while the first two refer to the absolute *huwiyya* of God, in terms of which He is entirely dissociated from His creation, this one asserts the *huwiyya* as an amalgamation of all the Names, which makes it the chief manner in which God is connected to, and manifested in, His creation.

2. Unity of the Names (*aḥadiyyat al-asmā'*). Predictably, this is the same as the unity of the attributes (*al-aḥadiyya al-ṣifatiyya*) since the Names are the attributes of God. Hence, al-Qāshānī proffers an abridged version of the previous definition, saying that it "is the unity of attributes (*al-aḥadiyya al-ṣifatiyya*), as you know."[24] We know this because al-Qāshānī has just told us in the preceding definition.

21 Ibid.
22 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilaḥāt*, 73.
23 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 703.
24 Ibid., 152.

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3. Unity of Action (*al-aḥadiyya al-fiʿliyya*). This is the most differentiated from of unity (*aḥadiyya*) and pertains to the actions of God, or rather, things that occur in the phenomenal realm. Al-Qāshānī gives the following signification of it:

> Through it the means of actions are eradicated and all of them are seen as the act of the Truth alone, be He exalted. It is necessary to know that there are two facets of this unity of action (*al-aḥadiyya al-fiʿliyya*): one of them is the eradication of considering means [of things], and this is the state of those who seek annihilation (*mustahlikīn*). The second of them is consideration of the unity of witnessing (*al-aḥadiyya al-mashhūda*), [and this is] the person who is at the station of the highest perfection (*maqām al-akmaliyya*),[25] in terms of which, the meaning is eradication of different means [of things] with regard to tracing the act to the Truth from tracing it to the creation because the meaning of "eradication of the means," when viewed properly, is eradicating its

25 The term station (*maqām*) requires some explanation. It is one that is continually used with state (*ḥāl*) and the difference between them is succinctly explained by al-Tahānawī, who defines station (*maqām*) as being "in the form of an adverb [of place], according to the wayfarers [on the spiritual path] (*sālikīn*). It is that which is maintained by and remains [with] the servant, for if it is not maintained, [then] it is called a state (*ḥāl*)." (Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 3:1227.) The basic difference between station (*maqām*) and state (*ḥāl*) is therefore the difference between a persisting state and one that is transitory. But what of station (*maqām*) itself? Al-Qāshānī offers a detailed definition in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* that is virtually reproduced *verbatim* in his other two lexicons. Station (*maqām*), says al-Qāshānī, is:

> Fulfilment of the rights of [one's] duties, for if one has not fulfilled the rights of the rank he is in, then it is not right for him to progress to that which is above it. … The meaning of fulfilment does not signify that none of the stages of the lower stations remain until he may proceed to the higher, for most of the remaining things of the lower stations and its final stages will only be rectified in the higher [anyway]. Rather, the meaning is that he firmly establishes himself in it in such a manner that he does not change and it [becomes] a [permanent] state (*ḥāl*). (Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilaḥāt*, 107–108.)

In this comprehensive definition, al-Qāshānī seeks to underscore two things: first, that being on a station means consciously fulfilling the rights of that station. It is not something that one simply stumbles upon; it requires sustained effort from the wayfarer on the spiritual path. This is the difference between station (*maqām*) and state (*ḥāl*): the former is a state that persists due to effort, and the latter is an impulse or a fleeting condition. Al-Qāshānī makes this point most forcefully in his *Laṭāʾif*, where he defines state (*ḥāl*) as "that to which the heart inclines without proper consideration, without procurement or acquisition … and that is in contradistinction to station (*maqām*) because, according to them, it is a term for fulfilment of the rights of [one's] duties. … This is why it is said, 'States are given and stations earned.'" (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 332.)

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> consideration [totally, and] that is the state of those who seek annihilation (*mustahlikīn*), as you know.[26]

This type of unity (*aḥadiyya*) is attributing all things that transpire in the sensible realm (and indeed, pre-sensible realms) to God, who is the true agent of each action; it is the categorical elimination of secondary causes, and unequivocal acquiescence to occasionalism.[27] The two facets of this unity (*aḥadiyya*) that al-Qāshānī mentions seem to be (1) knowing that all the actions are fundamentally carried out by God, and (2) actually seeing the act as an act of God without even perceiving the creational intermediary; this, it would appear, is the preserve of those at the station of the highest perfection (*maqām al-akmaliyya*).

3.3 *Unity of Union*

Al-Qāshāni has devoted much ink to the explication of the term unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*) and all its variations, and if he has been comprehensive in his analysis of this term, choosing even to include permutations of the same terms, then it is only because he considers unity (*aḥadiyya*) so important, as we have seen and will have ample occasion to see. But if he details the connotations of this term, he descants on the unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*), where he synthesizes all the erstwhile expressions of unity (*aḥadiyya*). Let us dissect this long entry:

> It is called the plane of unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*) and the stage of unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*). The meaning of this is the first differentiation of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) and the first stage, which is not considered in reference to anything but the [divine] being alone, as alluded to by his, peace and blessings be upon him, saying, "There was God while nothing was with Him."[28] This is because the matter then, and [by "then"] I mean in the stage of unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*), was [absolute] oneness. Since there was nothing there besides the [divine] being alone with [its] connection [to everything] and its unity (*aḥadiyya*), which is the essence of the one [divine] being, being included in it. So this connection, even though it is manifested in the form (*ṣūra*) of the

26 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 153.

27 For more details on the proponents of secondary causation and divine occasionalism, and the deniers of it in the Islamic tradition, see Catarina Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes*, 223–224.

28 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:129.

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> attributes in the second stage, which is the plane of division and separation, only combines two attributes: oneness (*waḥda*) and multiplicity (*kathra*).[29]

This paragraph tersely summarizes all the stages of differentiation of the divine *huwiyya* up to, but not including, unity of action (*al-aḥadiyya al-fiʿliyya*). Al-Qāshānī begins with what he defines as the first differentiation and the first stage, which is the basic meaning of unity (*aḥadiyya*). This is the stage where there is a portending of creation, but nothing actually exists besides God, as such, there is no point of reference besides God, and everything is unified in Him. In this sense, He is connected to everything and dissociated from everything, as He *is* everything. It is for this reason that al-Qāshānī asserts the dissociation of God from everything at the beginning of his definition, citing the prophetic tradition, "There was God while nothing was with Him," as proof of this assertion only to state that "there was nothing there besides the [divine] being alone with [its] connection [to everything]." He was thus dissociated from everything and connected to everything, He was alone but with everything, as everything was unified in Him and He was everything.

Al-Qāshānī then advances to the second differentiation where the Names come into being. He says the source of all the Names is but two things: oneness (*waḥda*) and multiplicity (*kathra*) because all the Names allude to the one, true God, and they are naught save He in the multitudinous manifestations of creation. But at the stage of the first differentiation, there is no actual separation and only a presentiment that the Names will emerge from it, as he elucidates:

> So there are two forms and [two] connections among the connections of the all-encompassing, united, undivided [divine] essence (*dhāt*). [Yet] the separation that has these two attributes is not a true separation in itself, and this separation becomes the cause of comprising the comprehensiveness of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) because it is the connection of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) in its first stage, as judged in terms of there not being there an "other" or "otherness."[30]

So the first differentiation is not a physical differentiation, rather an alteration in the divine consciousness predisposing it towards creation. There is no

29 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 153.
30 Ibid.

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"other" or "otherness" at this stage; nothing exists besides God in His absolute solitude. Al-Qāshānī continues in the same vein:

> Thus, it [and by "it"] I mean that connection and qualification of the attributes is judged to be a separation between it [that is, the attributes] and that which is described by it in the second stage. But this is in terms of its innerness, which is a matter of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) and nothing else, as there is no otherness or contrast there [in this stage]. This is because there is not an attribute of the [divine] essence (*dhāt*), rather it is the [very] essence of the [divine] being.[31]

Those Names which are individualized entities in the second differentiation, explains al-Qāshānī, are deemed to be a separation in the first differentiation only insofar as they express a change in the divine consciousness, but not as a physical separation. Thus, there is no otherness in the first stage and all the Names that will come to be in the second differentiation are not simply attributes of God in this stage, they are the essence of God.

Seamlessly transitioning to unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*), as a station (*maqām*) of the gnostic, al-Qāshānī adds:

> So this is the stage of unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*), in which seeing separation in the [divine] essence (*dhāt*), in terms of its differentiation and generalization (*iṭlāq*), is not proper. Or say, [seeing separation] in it [that is, the divine being], in terms of the reality of realities and the first manifestation (*al-tajallī al-awwal*), [is not proper] due to the loftiness of this station, which is the station of unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*). Its superiority over all the ranks of separation is the superiority through which the description and the thing described become one. Or say, the [divine] essence (*dhāt*) and its matters [become] the same one [divine] essence (*dhāt*), without any contrast or otherness.[32]

As a station of the gnostic, then, unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*) represents a rank where the gnostic bypasses the sensible divisions and manifestations of the Cosmos and perceives them in their atavistic state of the first differentiation. He thus views everything as God before they became differentiated from Him, as He is the true source of all existence.

31 Ibid., 154.
32 Ibid.

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In his concluding remarks on this disquisition of unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*), al-Qāshānī states that a natural consequence of circumventing the physical manifestations of the Names and seeing them only as God is that the gnostic's own reality dissipates:

> This is why whoever's secret [rank] rises from [seeing] effects by stages of separation, restriction (*taqyīd*) by their results, and concealment by viewing [things in this way] to the plane of unity of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*), with all its vigor of reality from all the judgements of multiplicity (*kathra*) and otherness, then nothing of his reality remains except this reality of unity (*ḥaqīqat al-aḥadiyya*). He [would] thus say:
>
> I have ascertained that I am, in reality, [the] one
> And the sobriety of union corroborates the effacement of dispersion
> He [would] also say:
> I am he who loves, and He who loves me
> And he [would] say:
> I have ascertained that I am the very one of whom I am a slave
> And other such things, the meaning of which, you already know.[33]

A much fuller and richer picture emerges of *huwiyya* and its uses from the citations of the *Taʾwīlāt* when used in conjunction with, and in addition to, the definitions supplied in al-Qāshānī's lexicons. Indeed, this is how he intended them to be used—as a guide to the concise explanations he proffers in his commentary. The *Taʾwīlāt*, it is clear, was never meant to stand alone, unaccompanied by the lexicons, unless by an advanced gnostic.

If it is true that the lexicons augment and enhance our comprehension of *huwiyya*, it is also true that the symbolic value of *huwiyya* reaches its apogee in the sphere of the God-creation dualism. This is nowhere more apparent than in the commentary of verses that provide propitious contexts for such an exploration.

3.4 *The Divine* Huwiyya *and the Cosmos*

The fundamental difference between God's absolute existence and the Cosmos' contingent existence, and the disparate facets of this dynamic, are exquisitely presented by al-Qāshānī in his commentary of chapter 53, where it is written that there was a distance of two bows when Muḥammad met either Gabriel or God:[34]

33 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 154.

34 Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 17:60.

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> *So he was at a distance of two bows*, that he, upon him be peace, was [a distance of] two bows from the boundary of the domain of the existence that combines all the divided parts by an imaginary line, in terms of the Truth and the creation. So it is regarded as an imaginary line that divides the domain [of all existence] in two: in terms of the beginning [of existence] and its closeness, the creation is the first bow, the veil for the *huwiyya* in the essences of the created things and its forms; and the Truth is the last half, to which [the created things] get closer little by little and are effaced and annihilated in it. [However,] in terms of the end [of these created beings] and [His] suspension [far from them], the Truth is the first bow, the One who is fixed in His state always and forever, and the creation is the last bow, which is originated after the annihilation as a new creation that He gives it.[35]

There are two ways of looking at the relationship between God and His creation, says al-Qāshānī: one in terms of His absolute existence, in which His state is fixed always and forever, as opposed to the creation which is annihilated and created anew. In these terms, God is the first bow—the source of all creation, and the Cosmos is the second bow, as the differentiation of the divine *huwiyya*. But there is also another way of approaching this mutualism: it is by looking at the innumerable forms of the divine *huwiyya* in the Cosmos, and tracing their trajectory towards the *huwiyya* and ultimate annihilation in it. Viewed in this way, the Cosmos is the first bow, a "veil for the *huwiyya* in the essences of the created things and its forms," as it cloaks the *huwiyya* in its differentiated form; and God is the last bow, the source to which the creation yearns for proximity and final annihilation. Both aspects fundamentally describe the same relationship, the only difference is whether it is seen from the perspective of the divine *huwiyya* or the Cosmos.

3.5 *The Differentiations of the Divine* Huwiyya

Though al-Qāshānī proffers details about the God-Cosmos dynamic in the aforementioned passage, he is less expressive about the divine *huwiyya*'s differentiations. For an analysis of this issue, we must turn to the commentary of chapter 6, where God declares that He will resurrect all creatures one day by His command:

35 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:579.

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> *On the day He says, "Be!" So it will be*, that is, the eternity, which is the infinity of manifesting things in the eternity of His essence (*dhāt*), which is the absolute eternity. And it is when His eternal will (*irādatuhu'l-qadīma*) became attached with the manifestation in the differentiation of His essence (*dhāt*), expressed by His saying, "Be!" And it occurs after the eternity in intellectual terms but does not come after this eternity temporally, only in relative intellectual terms in His essence (*dhāt*), be He exalted, for the differentiations come after the pure *huwiyya* intellectually and physically, and its manifestation is by the [divine] will named "His saying 'Be!'" So it is without interval or delay, known as "So it will be," because it was not present in eternity.[36]

Corroborating the definitions and statements he has made about the divine *huwiyya*—here signifying the unknown, but not the utterly numinous God—al-Qāshānī discloses that the pure *huwiyya* (*al-huwiyya al-maḥḍa*) becomes differentiated by the divine consciousness' inclination towards creation, as articulated by the pronouncement "Be!" There are many points of note in this commentary: al-Qāshānī selects a verse that ostensibly refers to the Day of Resurrection and conscripts it in the elucidation of the creation of the Cosmos. He evades the dichotomy of using a verse clearly referring to the future (*kun, fayakūn*) to explain something that unmistakably occurred in the past by transcending temporality itself.[37] So he writes that the verse alludes to the manifestation of things in the eternity of God's being, "which is the absolute eternity." This means that the reality of God's creating by pouring forth ever more differentiated forms of the divine *huwiyya* is something unaffected by temporality; it simply is. It existed then, just as it does today, which is why creation continues to proliferate.

But this raises the question: How are we to make sense of things that seem to follow one another temporally? Like the inclination of the divine conscious-

36 Ibid., 1:173–174.

37 One observes hues of Avicenna here, who himself seems to skirt temporality in his conciliation between orthodox creationism and Neoplatonic emanationism. (See Dastagir, "Plotinus and Ibn Sina," 1–14.) This is because Avicenna is widely regarded as a "Neoplatonised Aristotelian" and believed that the world proceeded from God from eternity. (See Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām*, 444–448.) But it would be unwise and unjust to suggest Avicenna believed the world was co-eternal with God because, while he asserted that it did not proceed from God in time, he also maintained that there was a fundamental difference between God and the creation in that the former is necessary while the latter contingent. It may thus be more accurate to say that Avicenna believed in the atemporality of the world, rather than in its eternity.

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ness towards creation symbolized by His pronouncement, "Be!" Al-Qāshānī answers this implicit contradiction by stating that there is no temporal lag between God's erstwhile state and His post-"Be" state that predisposes towards creation. This means there is no actual change in the divine consciousness as the state of inclination towards creation was always in Him, just as all the future differentiations were in Him in His unified state. There is, then, no change in the nature of God—He is constant. Nevertheless, intellectually, one may conceive of a difference between the states in order to comprehend the divine, or as al-Qāshānī puts it, "it occurs after the eternity in intellectual terms but does not come after this eternity temporally." So even if we think of this as a change, it is not, and there is no temporal relationship between the two states.

Al-Qāshānī is adamant that though the divine consciousness is ever-constant and the Cosmos is nothing but a manifestation of the Names, it does not follow that the Cosmos, too, is temporally transcendent. He accordingly concludes his analysis by detailing that further differentiations of the divine *huwiyya* do physically and intellectually follow one another, and this is elucidated by the phrase "*So it will be*" because it did not exist in eternity. This necessarily means that, though, in one sense God is seen as pouring forth existence from His Self and the Cosmos is a manifestation of His Names; in another, there is a profound disconnect between God and His creation: He is absolutely existent, it is contingently so; He is eternal and has always existed, it is not and has not; He is ever-constant, it is ever-changing. We see a perspicuous articulation of this point in the commentary of chapter 67:

> *And He is the Kind*, the One who knows the innermost [details] of them [i.e. the secrets of men], the One who carries out their concealments, *the Knowing*, about what is manifested from their states, that is, the One who is acquainted with the inner and outer aspects of what He has created; rather, it is Him in reality in its inward and outward aspects; there is no difference [between them] except in [terms of] absolute and contingent [existence], and unrestricted and restricted [existence], and concealment of the *huwiyya* by "this-ness" (*hādhiyya*), and [concealment] of the Reality by individuality.[38]

Ingeminating the maxim that the Cosmos is the manifestation of God, al-Qāshānī opines that the intimate secrets of the creation are nothing but the

38 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:631.

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secrets of God. There is no difference between God and His creation besides their fundamental existence being of different kinds: God's existence is unrestricted as He is manifested in innumerable forms in all planes of existence, no limitation being imposed on the number or kind of forms in which He may be expressed. The creation, on the other hand, is restricted in the form it may adopt, and herein lies another difference between God and the Cosmos. This disjuncture between the two is described by al-Qāshānī as the *huwiyya* of God being concealed by the "this-ness" (*hādhiyya*) of creation, that is, their restricted form, which can only be "this" or "that."[39] He thus concludes that God (the Reality) is concealed by the sensible individuation of the innumerable existents.

3.6 *The Attributes of the Divine* Huwiyya

Huwiyya has hitherto been employed in the articulation of the essence of the unknown God, but in the manner He is communicated to His creation. Though unknown to us, we know Him to be so, and can name the unknown God and through this, know Him. If we know Him to be unknown, this "unknown-ness," as opposed to unknowability, is an epithet of the divine *huwiyya*. This distinguishes the divine *huwiyya*, which is when the essence of God has not yet been differentiated into the Names, from the Names themselves. So we can think of the divine *huwiyya* as itself having a set of attributes exclusive to it, before the emergence of the Names, themselves designations of the differentiated divine essence. "Unknown-ness," therefore, is an attribute of the divine *huwiyya* just as "the Knowing," "the Seeing" and others are attributes of the differentiated divine self after the emergence of the Names. Al-Qāshānī alludes to this subtlety in his first use of the term *huwiyya* in the *Ta'wīlāt*. He comments on the verse chastising the people who reject Muḥammad, waiting for ever clearer portents of his prophethood to be displayed:

> *Are they waiting … for nothing but that God comes to them*, [that is,] God manifests Himself, *in the canopies* (*ẓulal*), the attributes of *huwiyya* from among the manifestation of all the attributes.[40]

39 Neither matter nor form, nor even a composite of the two, Duns Scotus argues that "this-ness," or haecceity, is the primary individuating element of any living body. Al-Qāshānī, while holding the concordant view that "this-ness" is an expression of the inviduality of a sensible being, sees it as a manifestation of an individual divine Name, individuated uniquely in that particular creature.

40 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:65.

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In this short exegetical extract, al-Qāshānī clearly segregates the attributes of the divine *huwiyya* from the other attributes, even though the other attributes are nothing but a further differentiation of the *huwiyya*. The reason for this, of course, is that one of the chief attributes of the divine *huwiyya* is its "unknown-ness," which is antithetical to the Names, as their primary function is to impart the attributes of God. Furthermore, just because the divine Names are a differentiated form of the divine *huwiyya* does not preclude existence of the pre-differentiated *huwiyya*, this *huwiyya* continues to exist along with the Names, just as God exists along with the Cosmos, the most differentiated form of His self. It is in this sense that all the planes of existence are simultaneously existent in God, and all are He but not He, since His reality is the only true reality. An ineluctable consequence of this complex dynamic is that God is simultaneously unknown and known.

Vestiges of this perception of God, as the comprehensive assimilation of all the planes of reality, are descried in the manner al-Qāshānī portrays the difference between the attributes of the divine *huwiyya* from the attributes in general. He says the unbelievers wait for naught save that the "attributes of *huwiyya*" be manifested "from the manifestation of all the attributes." On the one hand, this asserts the distinction between the attributes of the *huwiyya* from the differentiated divine attributes, that is, the Names, but on the other, it conveys that the attributes of the divine *huwiyya* are among the attributes in general. This furnishes us with the three ways in which God, after the first differentiation, may be fathomed: as the unknown God; as the God to whom belong the Names, who can be known to us in a certain way; or as the God who is at once known and unknown, who has an unknown *huwiyya* but known Names. The last of these is the most comprehensive manner in which the primarily differentiated God may be understood.

The dynamic of God concurrently being the less and more differentiated forms of Himself is also explicitly expressed in al-Qāshānī's commentary of chapter 33:

> *Surely We offered the trust to the heavens, the Earth and the mountains*, by placing the reality of the *huwiyya* in them and veiling it by differentiations in them, *but they refused to bear it*, as the magnitude of the crime of accepting it without having the preparedness [to do so] became manifest unto them.[41]

41 Ibid., 2:470.

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The reality of the *huwiyya*, says al-Qāshānī, was veiled by the differentiations in the heavens, the Earth and the mountains. This may, more clearly, be depicted as the differentiations that allowed them to exist, as they are nothing but manifestations of that very *huwiyya*. We therefore notice that both the less differentiated form of God—the *huwiyya*—and the more differentiated forms—the heavens, the Earth and the mountains—exist simultaneously. Moreover, we see that the increase in differentiation is actually instrumental in veiling the differentiated thing from knowing its erstwhile form. This, then, is the answer to the implicit paradox of how something that exists as a differentiated form of something else may then be given that very thing from which it was differentiated, to wit, how the *huwiyya* may be given to the heavens, the Earth and the mountains, when they were differentiated from the *huwiyya* in the first place: it is because the *huwiyya* and its differentiated forms exist contemporaneously.

So we know that the undifferentiated manifestation of *huwiyya* was offered to its more evolved analogue. What we do not know is *how*. Al-Qāshānī writes that the reality of the *huwiyya* was placed in the heavens, the Earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it. They already had the reality of the *huwiyya*, but could not hold on to it as they did not have the preparedness to do so. If we combine the disparate facets of this puzzle, we may be able to deduce how the *huwiyya* was placed in them. First, we know that the heavens, the Earth and the mountains are differentiated forms of the *huwiyya*. Second, we know that they are veiled from this *huwiyya* by their differentiation. Third, we know that the reality of this *huwiyya* was given to them but they refused to accept it as they did not have the preparedness to do so. Tying these distinct strands of data together, it becomes perspicuous that the reality of the *huwiyya*—from which the heavens, the Earth and the mountains were veiled due to their insufficient preparedness—is actually knowledge of their being differentiated from the *huwiyya*. Though more allusive than explicit, more speculative than apodictic, al-Qāshānī's overall line of argumentation nudges the reader in this direction.[42]

42 In most conventional commentaries, "trust" (*amāna*) is said to be an allusion to all the aspects of religion, that is, all the commands (*awāmir*) that need to be followed and all the prohibitions (*nawāhī*) that need to be avoided. There are slight differences of opinion, with some stating it refers to the obligations (*wājibāt*), while others saying it means the five prayers (*ṣalawāt*), but the general consensus is that the term denotes obedience to God. (See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 10:338–342; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 14:162–164; al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ*, 25:201–202.) Only in the commentary of al-Qushayrī is the term related to gnosis (*maʿrifa*). Al-Qushayrī writes, "*they refused to bear it*, that is, refused to keep it, *and man assumed it*, that is, failed to keep it. And they [those who failed to keep the trust] are in

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They were given knowledge of this reality, the reality of the *huwiyya*, or, one could say, their own reality, but did not have the capacity to bear the burden of this knowledge, so it was taken from them. Man, on the other hand, did accept this burden, which is why one of Ibn ʿArabī's favorite adages is, "whoever knows himself, knows his Lord,"[43] since knowing yourself is actually knowing that you are a differentiated form of the *huwiyya*. This is the station of oneness of unity (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*). Yet, not everyone comprehends this; in fact, it is but a select few who have a true understanding of this concept—they are the gnostics. This is because knowing one's true reality, though it is something that God has bestowed upon mankind generally, as elucidated by this verse, represents the absolute potential of man. It does not necessarily follow that all men will reach this potential, most, lamentably, do not.

3.7 *The Station of* Huwiyya

Coined the station of *huwiyya* by al-Qāshānī, the realization that he is but a differentiation of the divine *huwiyya* represents the ultimate potential of man. How the Qurʾan is perceived by people is evincive of this. He writes in his commentary of the verse that catalogs the virtues of the Qurʾan:

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degrees: the unbelievers failed to keep the basic [rights] of the trust, and that is gnosis—so they disbelieved. Those who were less than that [in wickedness] failed by disobedience, and some were worse and others were less so." (Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭāʾif*, 5:173.) Al-Qushayrī remarks that the most fundamental right of the trust (*amāna*) is gnosis. However, he does not denote by gnosis the higher echelons of spiritual enlightenment as does al-Qāshānī; rather, he identifies this gnosis as the basic belief in God. The unbelievers fail to honor this central right of the trust (*amāna*) and are consequently much worse than those who merely disobey God while acknowledging His existence and oneness.

43 He cites this proverb a total of five times in the *Fuṣūṣ* (three times directly and twice indirectly) and around eighty times directly in the *Futūḥāt*. But this statement does not appear in any of the canonical Ḥadīth texts. Ibn Taymiyya has classified it as "fabricated" (*mawḍūʿ*), Abu Zakariyya Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) has remarked that "it is not proven" (*laysa bi-thābit*), Abu'l-Mundhir al-Samʿānī (d. 489/1096?) writes in his book, *al-Qawāṭiʿ*, that "it is not known to be a statement of the Prophet (*marfūʿ*), and is only reported from Yaḥyā ibn Muʿādh al-Rāzī (d. 258/872), that is, from his sayings." Ibn ʿArabī, however, seemed to be aware of its weak chain of transmission, but relied on his spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) to verify its authenticity, for he says, "Though it is not sound through transmission, it is sound, according to us, through spiritual unveiling (*kashf*)." (Shams al-Dīn al-Safīrī, *Sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 24:12.) It is noteworthy that Aḥmad Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 973/1566) also believes that the proverb belongs to Yaḥyā ibn Muʿādh al-Rāzī (see al-Haytamī, *al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthiyya*, 290), and the contemporary Ḥadīth scholar Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, in his *Silsilatʾl-aḥādītha al-ḍaʿīfa waʾl-mawḍūʿa wa athruhaʾl-sayyiʾa fiʾl-umma*, too, claims that it has no basis (*aṣl*). (Al-Albānī, *Silsilat*, 1:165.)

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> *And this is a reminder*, full of goodness and blessing, containing the three matters (the criterion, *furqān*; an illumination, *ḍiyā'*; and a reminder, *dhikr*) but more than just that [as it also has] intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*) in the station of *huwiyya* and the spring of the union of unity (*ʿayn jamʿ al-aḥadiyya*), the most comprehensive of comprehensive speech (*jāmiʿ jawāmiʿ al-kalim*).[44]

Al-Qāshānī delineates two levels on which the Qur'an is received: on the lower level it contains three matters, which we know from the context[45] refers to it being the criterion between good and evil, an illumination of the correct path, and a reminder of God. These three things were present in the Torah and it is also the lower degree on which most people interact with and relate to the Qur'an. But al-Qāshānī comments that *furqān* means "the detailed knowledge from spiritual unveiling (*al-ʿilm al-tafṣīlī al-kashfī*) known as the discriminating intellect (*al-ʿaql al-furqānī*),"[46] an illumination (*ḍiyā'*) refers to "the perfect light (*nūr tāmm*) from spiritual witnessing (*al-mushāhadāt al-rūḥāniyya*),"[47] and a reminder (*dhikr*) denotes "a reminder and admonition *for the God-fearing; those who* have purified their souls from the vices and attributes of being veiled so great noble lights radiate from their hearts on their souls due to their clearness and purity, thus they inherit fear [of God] in the state of absence (*ḥāl al-ghayba*) before they arrive at the station where the heart is present."[48]

A conspicuous contradiction pulsates between his two designations because, on the one hand, al-Qāshānī asserts that the Torah contains knowledge from spiritual unveiling, from spiritual witnessing, and admonition for those who are not veiled; and on the other, he remarks that the Qur'an is "more than just that" because it also has "intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*)." This dichotomy emanates from a perceived parity between the ranks where one gains detailed knowledge from spiritual unveiling (*al-ʿilm al-tafṣīlī al-kashfī*) and intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*),

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44 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:376.

45 Al-Qāshānī, in mentioning the three matters, is referring to verse 21:48 (two verses prior to this one) where the Torah is described as the criterion (*furqān*), an illumination (*ḍiyā'*) and a reminder (*dhikr*). He remarks that the Qur'an, while retaining these traits of the Torah, has much more besides.

46 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:376.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

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and between spiritual witnessing (*al-mushāhadāt al-rūḥānīyya*) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*). For what al-Qāshānī depicts is not the most basic level on which one relates to the Qurʾan; it is the difference between a high rank of gnosis and the highest rank of gnosis.

The Torah, al-Qāshānī says, contains detailed knowledge from spiritual unveiling (*al-ʿilm al-tafṣīlī al-kashfī*) and information that may be gleaned by spiritual witnessing (*al-mushāhadāt al-rūḥānīyya*). It consequently occupies a high rank and gnostics may acquire much from its spiritual content. This the Qurʾan has as well. But in addition to this, the Qurʾan has "intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*) in the station of *huwīyya* and the spring of the union of unity (*ʿayn jamʿ al-aḥadiyya*)," which is the highest level of gnosis, for the station of *huwīyya* is the rank at which the gnostic becomes aware that his reality is actually the differentiated form of the *huwīyya*. This, then, is where his reality is annihilated in the *huwīyya*. It is for this reason that al-Qāshānī refers to the Qurʾan as "the most comprehensive of comprehensive speech (*jāmiʿ jawāmiʿ al-kalim*)" because though the Torah is lofty and contains spiritual enlightenment, it is not this, and though it bestows a high rank of gnosis, it does not bequeath this rank.

So the two levels of interaction al-Qāshānī mentions vis-à-vis the Qurʾan are: a high level that is equal to the level of the Torah, the level of spiritual unveiling and witnessing; and the highest level of *huwīyya*-consciousness that is only afforded through the Qurʾan. *Huwīyya*-consciousness is therefore the ultimate potential of man, a rank entrusted to him only by the Qurʾan, but a rank also that is the preserve of the select few since the *vulgum pecus* are not only unable to engage with the Qurʾan on this level, they also fail to connect with it on the level of the Torah, which itself is only accessible to lower-level gnostics.

3.8 *Submergence in the Sea/Spring of* Huwiyya

Admitting many synonyms—annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and unity of union (*aḥadīyyat al-jamʿ*), among others—the state of *huwīyya*-consciousness is a station where one becomes subsumed in the divine *huwīyya*, for appreciation of one's essence as a differentiation of the *huwīyya* allows one to see through the differentiation and perceive the *huwīyya* itself. *Huwīyya*, when used in this sense, is not the undifferentiated *huwīyya*, it is not God in His absoluteness, for as has been mentioned, no existent can even fathom Him on this most rarefied level. This is as true for Ibn ʿArabī as it is for his disciple. In the words of Henry Corbin:

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> What a man attains at the summit of his mystic experience is not, and cannot be, the Divine Essence in its undifferentiated unity. And that is why Ibn ʿArabī rejected the pretension of certain mystics who claimed "to become one with God."[49]

Al-Qāshānī elaborates on this issue many times and in many ways in his commentary; often allegorizing this union with the differentiated God to submergence in the sea or spring of *huwiyya*, it is a state in which the self becomes annihilated in the differentiated *huwiyya*. Best described in the commentary of chapter 12 in a verse that speaks of Yūsuf's false incarceration, al-Qāshānī writes:

> The lover, the one who witnesses the beauty [of God] is perplexed, negligent of all the creation, and of the differentiations of his existence; nay, of his [very] self, [as he is] immersed in the spring of union (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*) until his annihilation is finished and his intoxication complete. Then he returns to sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) and remembers the differentiations. So when his [Yūsuf's] annihilation was complete by submergence in the sea of *huwiyya* and effacement in the unified essence (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*), and his term in prison was over, God returned his life to him and gave him an existence from His essence (*dhāt*) and His attributes.[50]

One is no longer aware of the creation, instructs al-Qāshānī, when he is immersed in the spring of union (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*), a state synonymous with being submerged in the sea of *huwiyya* and effacement in the unified essence (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*). The synonymity of these expressions is showcased by al-Qāshānī, who uses the former in a generic way only to adduce an example of it through Yūsuf, in the delineation of which he uses the latter two phrases. In this raptness, the gnostic sees past the creation and past his ostensible essence to the beauty of the *huwiyya* that is the source of all being.

The impression given by al-Qāshānī is that this state of complete immersion in the *huwiyya* is an evanescent one, but one whose effects abide. After submergence in the sea of *huwiyya* and the spring of union, says al-Qāshānī, God returns the gnostic (in this case Yūsuf) to a state of sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) and he remembers the differentiations, that is, the ostensible forms of the Cosmos; he is able to reconnect to the creation on a sensible plane. But the gnosis gained

49 Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim, 273.
50 Al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 1:270.

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while in this state of supreme annihilation remains with him, and it is to this that al-Qāshānī alludes when he states that God gives "him an existence from His essence (*dhāt*) and His attributes."

Since all existence comes from God, the Cosmos being nothing but a manifestation of His being and attributes, there seems nothing special in this conferral of existence from His essence until we recognize that this existence is unlike the one enjoyed by all other contingent beings. It is an existence that allows him to know that his existence is from God's very essence and attributes. It is this gnosis that bequeaths the special rank given to the gnostic: the enduring appreciation of his essence as the differentiated form of the *huwiyya*. And it is this that provokes al-Qāshānī to articulate it as "an existence from His essence (*dhāt*) and His attributes" because after submergence in the sea of *huwiyya*, the gnostic forever knows that his existence is directly from God's essence (*dhāt*) and God's attributes, that it is indeed nothing but a manifestation of His essence and attributes.

That submergence in the spring or sea of *huwiyya* is a privilege afforded to only the highest gnostics is evident from the commentary of chapter 10 where al-Qāshānī says, "*Surely the friends of God*, those immersed in the spring of unified *huwiyya* (*ʿayn al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*) by annihilation of the *inniyya* …"[51] Defining "friends of God" as "those immersed in the spring of unified *huwiyya* (*ʿayn al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*)," al-Qāshānī explains that this is not something that just happens. Rather, though it is a boon from God, it still requires effort on the part of the mystic who must annihilate his *inniyya*.[52] *Inniyya* being a vital part of this equation, we must again interrogate al-Qāshānī's lexicons to ascertain the signification of this term, that we may arrive at a deeper understanding of his overall meaning.

3.9 Huwiyya, Inniyya *and* Anāniyya

Remarkably, the most succinct definition of *inniyya* is located in the *Laṭāʾif*; here al-Qāshānī writes that it is, "consideration of the self in terms of its intrinsic rank."[53] The *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, putting some flesh on this, says it is, "realization of entitative existence (*al-wujūd al-ʿaynī*) in terms of [a thing's] intrinsic rank."[54] The *Iṣṭilāḥāt* characterization being more elaborate, yet still abstruse,

51 Ibid., 1:241.

52 There is some debate as to whether this term should be vocalized as *inniyya*—an abstract noun derived from *inna* (indeed), *anniyya*—derived from *anna* (that) or *anā* (I). (The last of these is highly unlikely.) Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 125.

53 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 211.

54 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 58.

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we must consult *Rashḥ* for a comprehensive elucidation that affords the luxury of tying together these disparate snippets of information:

> The reality through man, as the absolute reality is qualified in every way by his intrinsic rank of *innìyya*. So the reality, with its *huwìyya*, is manifested in everything with an *innìyya*.[55]

The *innìyya*, then, is the intrinsic rank of all existents that acts as a filter in their processing of the divine *huwìyya*.[56] No existent can ever perceive the absolute reality of God, His *huwìyya*, except through this primordial lattice, even as the lattice, too, is a more differentiated manifestation of the *huwìyya*. So whereas the gnostics who have attained the rank of *huwìyya* or annihilation (*fanā'*) and have been submerged in the sea of *huwìyya* can identify their reality and the reality of everything in the Cosmos as manifestations of the divine *huwìyya*, most people, and all creatures and things, never know this truth because their elemental rank will not allow it.

Similar in form, but different in meaning, is the term *anānìyya*. Defined variously in al-Qāshānī's three lexicons as, "You saying, 'I,'"[57] "The reality which is qualified in every way by the slave, like his saying, 'my self,' 'my heart,' 'my hand,'"[58] and, most comprehensively, "The reality—as you know—called thus because everything is qualified by it, so it is said, 'my self,' 'my soul,' 'my heart,' 'my body,' 'my all,' 'my part.'"[59] This term is hugely important because of the way it is routinely used in the context of *huwìyya*, most notably in al-Qāshānī's commentary on the chapter of Ibrāhīm in the *Fuṣūṣ*:

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55 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.

56 This displays a change in emphasis from the early philosophical use of the term, in which it is used to denote "existence" or "being" and is generally synonymous with *huwìyya*. See Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 125–130.

57 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.

58 Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 57.

59 Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 211. Al-Tahānawī, in his explanation of this concept, gives virtually the same definitions as those offered by al-Qāshānī. He does, however, cite *Al-Tuḥfa al-mursala*, and states that in it, the term is defined as "your reality and your innerness, which is not the Truth. The negation of *al-anānìyya* is the very meaning of 'There is no god' (*lā ilāh*), then the subsequent affirmation of the Truth, be He praised, in your innerness is the very meaning of 'except God' (*illā Allāh*)." (Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 1:98.) Here, the Muslim declaration of faith has been split into first, a denial of the *anānìyya*, an egoistic barrier to annihilation in God, attested by the phrase "There is no god," and a subsequent annihilation and regeneration in God, by the affirmatory phrase "except God."

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> *So I have two aspects: He and I*
> *But He does not have I in my I*
> This means that the Perfect Man has two aspects: an aspect towards the Truth, and that is his internal *huwiyya* by virtue of which he is a Truth; and an aspect towards the Cosmos, and that is his apparent *anāniyya* by virtue of which he is a [form of] creation. So man has, through it [these two aspects] a *huwiyya* and an *anāniyya*, but the Truth does not have an *anāniyya* through man as He does not have, in this vicegerent, an "I," in reality. The meaning of the word "I" is that this word cannot be applied to Him in this context. This is why there is a "*fa*" (*fa lī wajhān, "So I have two aspects"*), even though it is an independent pronoun in the nominative case.[60]

The Perfect Man has both a *huwiyya*, which is his essence, the divine Attributes of which he is a manifestation, and an *anāniyya*, which is his creaturely, egoistic self. Al-Qāshānī goes on to aver that God "does not have an *anāniyya* through man." This is because the *anāniyya* denotes the creaturely aspect of man, which can never be applied to God. But in stating that God does not have a representation of "I" in man, or any existent in the sensible world, he could also be alluding to the incommunicable essence of God, which does not, and cannot, be transmitted in this, or any other realm. If this is the case, it is not that the term cannot be applied to God, just that it is not applied to Him since there is no manifestation of the absolute *anāniyya* in any realm.

Al-Qāshānī seems to insinuate that the "*fa*" in "*fa lī wajhān*," ("*So I have two aspects*") is one of causality (*sababiyya*). This is because Ibn ʿArabī writes, "He does not have save my being (*kawn*). … So I have two aspects."[61] Meaning, the reason I have two faces is because His only representation is my existence in the phenomenal world. Therefore, in order to maintain my essence *and* represent His Attributes, I must have two faces.

Ergo, the difference between *inniyya* and *anāniyya* is the difference between primordial limitations and intentional constraints, respectively. Both curtail gnosis of the *huwiyya*, both concentrate on the self, but whereas the former is an innate restriction of one's essential existence over which one has no power, the latter is a wilful state of being veiled by the ostensible superficiality of sensible reality. *Inniyya*, thus, may also be looked upon as the preparedness (*istiʿdād*) of any given existent, a predetermination of the rank it can achieve and how much of the divine *huwiyya* it can know.

60 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*, 127.
61 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 1:84.

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3.10 Huwiyya *and Preparedness*

Preparedness (*istiʿdād*)[62] is a term curiously absent from al-Qāshānī's lexicons, yet we encounter it in the *Taʾwīlāt*, both manifestly and allusively. We have already seen that al-Qāshānī explains that the heavens, the Earth and the mountains did not accept the trust from God because they did not have the preparedness to do so. It was an elemental realization that it did not behove them to assume such an awesome responsibility which led them to decline the offer. This idea is also present in most conventional commentaries, though not in the same terms. Al-Ṭabarī states:

> *Surely We offered the trust to the heavens, the Earth and the mountains*, [meaning] if they fulfil it, He will reward them and if they squander it, He will punish them. So they refused it without disobeying God; [rather, it was because] they were apprehensive, due to the loftiness of the religion of God, that they would not be able to carry out [its injunctions]. Then He presented it to Ādam who accepted it.[63]

This commentary makes clear that the heavens, the Earth and the mountains knew they did not have the preparedness to bear the burden of God's great religion. They knew this intrinsically—it was part of their primordial constitution. Al-Qurṭubī makes the same point in his *magnum opus*:

> He offered the trust to the heavens, the Earth and the mountains, and [said] there would be reward and punishment [if they fulfilled] and squandered it [respectively], that is, He made it manifest to them, but they did not assume its burden and were apprehensive. They [each] said, "I do not desire reward or punishment," and all of them said, "This is a matter for which we do not have the capacity."[64]

It is clear that the heavens, the Earth and the mountains knew they lacked the preparedness to carry out the inherent obligations of the trust. This was their primordial red line. Al-Rāzī sums it up best in his commentary:

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62 Preparedness (*istiʿdād*) is a concept that is very important to al-Qāshānī. For the types of preparedness and their role in the divine decree, see chapters: *Fī bayān al-istiʿdād wa tanawwuʿihā* and *Fīʾl-saʿāda waʾl-shakāwa* in *Al-Risāla fiʾl-qaḍāʾ waʾl-qadar*. (Al-Qāshānī, *Ādāb al-ṭarīqa wa asrār al-ḥaqīqa*, 73–79.)

63 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 10:339.

64 Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 14:164.

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> *We offered the trust*, that is, the duty (*taklīf*), and it is something besides that which is in [one's] nature. Know that this type of duty is not placed upon the heavens or the Earth because the Earth, the mountains and the heavens are all for the [purpose for] which they were created. [Thus,] the mountains do not seek to move, nor does the Earth seek to rise or the heavens seek to fall.[65]

Al-Rāzī explains that it is no more in the preparedness of the heavens, the Earth and the mountains to accept the trust God offered them, than it is in their preparedness to fall, rise or move, respectively. They simply do not have it in their primordial constitution to do these things.

Al-Qāshānī deals with this issue most forthrightly in his commentary of chapter 30 where the ephemerality of the world is expressed. It is written that God did not create everything but with truth,

> *And for an appointed term*, it is the limit of perfection of each of them and his annihilation in God, according to the *huwiyya* of his primary preparedness (*istiʿdādihi'l-awwal*) until they [all] bear witness, according to their preparedness, and God is cast in them with His attributes and being. *And yet many people deny the meeting with their Lord*, due to their being veiled from it so they think it will not occur except as an imaginary encounter (*al-muqābila al-ṣūriyya*) in another realm due to [their] *huwiyya* being inserted into [God's] *huwiyya*.[66]

Al-Qāshānī is adamant that the annihilation of a person in God is not absolute; rather, it is according to his preparedness. He calls this "the *huwiyya* of his primary preparedness (*istiʿdādihi'l-awwal*)." In other words, it is the primordial preparedness over which he has no control. He reiterates that everyone bears witness to God, knows God, is annihilated in God, manifests the being and attributes of God, according to his preparedness. Therefore, everything is qualified by this intrinsic rank. Or to put it another way:

> The same thing varies according to the states of the onlookers. Likewise is [the case for] the divine manifestation, that is, it is different for different onlookers. And if you want, you may say that God, the Exalted,

65 Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ*, 25:202.
66 Al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 2:454.

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> manifests in this way, that is, He manifests Himself in one manifestation which varies according to the varying states of the onlooker. And if you want, you may say that the Cosmos, in terms of looking at it, is the same as the Truth in His manifestation, that is, the Cosmos … in the view of the onlooker is like the manifestation of the Truth that he sees according to his disposition, which is different to what another person sees. Just as a person being punished with heat sees wind as fire and he who is punished with cold sees it as severe frost.[67]

Al-Qāshānī avers that though God is constant and unchanging, the way in which He manifests Himself varies in accordance with the varying states of the existents. This means that His manifestation does not actually alter; only the appreciation of that manifestation alters depending on the state of the person, which may be interpreted as God manifesting Himself as this in one person and as that in another, but in reality, it is simply their limited primordial vision of the divine.

He elaborates further, remarking,

> With regards to the divine manifestation, the meaning of the constitution of the onlooker is his state and spiritual form, not his physical constitution, for the [divine] manifestation to the gnostic does not differ according to his different parts. However, the body, too, in a way, is an entrance for this [manifestation] so at times the same manifestation varies according to the state of the onlooker and at other times the onlooker varies due to the varying manifestation, as has been mentioned. As for the heart of the perfect servant, stripped from the controls of multiplicity, it varies according to the varying [divine] manifestations, for this heart is with the manifestation of the divine when it changes and [it may be] the Truth vacillates his heart for He is the vacillator of hearts.[68] Both these things are possible in the [heart of the] perfect [servant], but not in others.[69]

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67 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*, 328. It is worth mentioning that al-Qāshānī adopts the same view when it comes to Qur'anic exegesis. He refers to this as "making correspondences" (*taṭbīq*) and emphasizes that the meaning of verses is in accordance with the spiritual states of people. (Lory, *Les Commentaires*, 28–33; Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries*, 77.)

68 This is a reference to a Ḥadīth in which the Prophet supplicates to His Lord in the following manner: "O Vacillator of hearts (*Ya muqallib al-qulūb*), establish my heart upon your religion!" (Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 33:7; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, 4:182.)

69 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*, 328–329.

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Here al-Qāshānī alludes to the subtlety of the onlooker of divine manifestation being himself a focussed manifestation of that very divine manifestation. This is why it may be claimed that the person varies according to his primordial preparedness because, since he himself is a manifestation of the divine *huwiyya*, his appreciation of the divine manifestation of his own form will be different to that of another person with a different spiritual rank.

The gnostic, however, is "stripped from the controls of multiplicity," that is, he sees the divine oneness in multiplicity and comprehends that the countless manifestations are nothing but a manifestation of God. The heart of the gnostic, therefore, "varies according to the varying [divine] manifestations" because it appreciates the underlying divine core of all things in the Cosmos. Al-Qāshānī, in the end, makes a discreet allusion to one other possible source of the gnostic's appreciation of the divine substrate that underpins all ostensible forms in sensible reality: God's guidance, for it is only He who may guide the heart to this final realization.[70] But, again, this is still under the sway of the preparedness, which is why such gnosis is "in the [heart of the] perfect [servant], but not in others" because it is only the heart of the gnostic that can be guided to this lofty station.

Returning to al-Qāshānī's commentary of chapter 30, we notice that the author uses the phrase "limit of perfection" with "primary preparedness" and "annihilation" in order to accentuate that, though the preparedness is the primordial rank of every existent, it is nevertheless just a potential—one that is not necessarily realized. He, rather soberly, alleges that most people are veiled and so do not attain the intrinsic rank designated for them. They thus think that their meeting with God will be an imaginary one and that their *huwiyya* will be inserted into God's *huwiyya* in a metaphorical sense. The spiritual skepticism in which annihilation in God is demoted to figurative status is the regressive repercussion of *anāniyya*-induced obscurantism.

The notion of all existents having elemental ranks by which they are arranged and classified is most sumptuously intimated in the commentary of chapter 6 where Muḥammad declares that he has been commanded to be the first to surrender to God:

> *Say: I have been commanded to be the first to submit* [*to Him*]. He said this, despite His saying, "*Then We revealed to you: 'Follow the way of Ibrāhīm, the upright.'*" Likewise, did Mūsā say, "*I turn to You in repentance and I am the*

70 For guidance and its interplay with preparedness, see chapter below on divine guidance.

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> *first of the believers*," because the ranks of the souls are different in terms of their closeness and remoteness from the divine *huwiyya*. So every person who is further, his faith is through he who is above him in rank, and the people of oneness (*ahl al-waḥda*) are all of the rank of divineness, the people of the first row, so their faith is without mediation, and the faith of those other than them is through them. … Everyone whose faith is without mediation is the first to believe, even if they have come into being later temporally, as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "We are the last, the foremost."[71,72]

Uncomplicated and unequivocal, al-Qāshānī declares that all "souls are different in terms of their closeness and remoteness from the divine *huwiyya*." This means the primordial preparedness of each is different and is translated in terms of proximity to or distance from the divine *huwiyya*. Those who are further from the divine *huwiyya* cannot be annihilated to the degree of those who are closer. Additionally, those who are further are actually dependent on those who are closer unless their faith is without mediation. All the prophets are independent, in a sense, because their faith is without mediation. But from a different vantage point, they are all dependent on the supreme Perfect Man, Muḥammad, as He is the fundamental reason for creation of the entire Cosmos and everyone in it, his perfect preparedness the cause for all their preparednesses.[73]

Here, again, the divine *huwiyya* is the unknown God, the ostensibly undifferentiated God, but not the unknowable, absolutely undifferentiated God. Proximity to and distance from this divine *huwiyya* is thus an expression for the level of gnosis and subsequent annihilation of each existent, just as it was in the commentary of chapter 53.[74]

3.11 *The Creational* Huwiyya

In his commentary of chapter 30, al-Qāshānī uses the term *huwiyya* to advert not only to God, but also to the essence of an existent. "*Many people deny the meeting with their Lord*," he says, "due to their being veiled from it so they think

71 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:68.

72 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:164.

73 For details on the "Doctrine of the Person of Muḥammad," as developed by Ibn 'Arabī and perpetuated by his school, see Arthur Jeffrey, "Ibn al-'Arabī's *shajarat al-kawn*." See also the chapter on the light of Muḥammad in *And Muḥammad is His Messenger* by Schimmel; and Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 84.

74 See above.

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it will not occur except as an imaginary encounter (*al-muqābila al-ṣūriyya*) in another realm due to [their] *huwiyya* being inserted into [God's] *huwiyya*." The confluence of the divine and creational *huwiyyāt* in this passage, rather than being identified with annihilation in God, is an impediment to it. The reason for this, it appears, is that when one considers his *huwiyya*, as a distinct entity to the *huwiyya* of God, true annihilation becomes inconceivable, and the comprehension of what true annihilation is, inaccessible.

Further, "*the meeting with their Lord*," by which al-Qāshānī seems to understand the absolute meeting with the knowable God, to wit, the meeting of the existent with the divine *huwiyya* in absolute union, is thought to occur on a metaphorical level due to the consideration of the independence of the *huwiyya*. So a person believes he will meet his Lord in "an imaginary encounter (*al-muqābila al-ṣūriyya*)" and in another realm, there being nothing real or lasting about his encounter, because he is unwilling to relinquish his *huwiyya* and would rather his *huwiyya* be *inserted* into the divine *huwiyya* without *losing* itself in the divine. This acceptance of a metaphorical meeting is an implicit denial of a true meeting—annihilation—precisely because it shows one considers his *huwiyya* as something separate from and different to the divine *huwiyya*.

The insertion of the creational *huwiyya* in the divine *huwiyya* being an articulation for concealment from the truth is only when it is from the point of view of the existent. If, on the other hand, it is from the perspective of God, the meaning is quite the opposite, as we see in the commentary of chapter 30 when al-Qāshānī furnishes the reader with a detailed account of the creation of the Cosmos. The most apposite section is the following:

> *So He completed them as seven heavens*, that is, the seven unseen realms that have been mentioned: the faculties, the spirit, the heart, the secret [the intellect], the soul, the hiddenness (*al-khafā'*), and the Truth who has inserted His *huwiyya* into the *huwiyya* of the existing person and has lowered Himself to create it on this level and has concealed Himself in it. Even though the seven forms of creation are created such that the *huwiyya* comes out of all of them, [it comes especially from] one of them, the fourth one between the heart and the secret of the intellect, and it is the closest heaven in terms of its closeness to the heart which makes a human human.[75]

75 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:519.

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Al-Qāshānī says that God inserting His *huwiyya* into the *huwiyya* of the existent is His clothing Himself in the existent and "concealing Himself in it." The Sufi tells not of two *huwiyyāt*, with the divine one being physically inserted into the creational one. Rather, this turn of phrase is used to describe the differentiation of the divine *huwiyya* into the faculties, the spirit, the heart, the intellect, the soul and the hiddenness of creation (by which the mystagogue means the most intimate aspect of oneself), for, as he says, *huwiyya* "comes out of all of them." There are, nonetheless, some forms of creation that express the *huwiyya* more intensely and more overtly than others; these are the heart and the intellect, as they are the defining traits of humans, or, in the words of al-Qāshānī, what "makes a human human," and since man is the most comprehensive and focussed expression of the divine *huwiyya*, it follows that those aspects of man which make him what he is will communicate the *huwiyya* most veraciously.

One final point worth noting in this passage is that al-Qāshānī describes the differentiations of God that allow the Cosmos to flutter into existence as God lowering Himself. This is because God, as the unknowable, absolute God, is too lofty for us to have any conception of Him, let alone forge any relationship with Him. The divine *huwiyya*, which, as stated before, is the unknown God, is still beyond what we know, though not beyond what we *can* know. It is with each subsequent differentiation that God becomes lower, or rather, closer to us so that we can finally know Him through knowing ourselves as we are the most focussed manifestation of His *huwiyya*.

3.12 Huwiyya *and the Veiled Ones*

We have seen how al-Qāshānī uses *huwiyya* in contexts that describe not only the people who acknowledge it, but those who deny it; and not only those who are cognizant of it, but those who are veiled from it. Indeed, *huwiyya* as an indicator of sciolism is just as efficacious as *huwiyya* as a barometer of gnosis. Having largely pinpointed the latter, let us now look a little more at illustrations of the former.

God commands Muḥammad and the believers:

> *Do not transgress*, by veiling yourselves with the veil of I-ness (*anā'iyya*)[76] and attributing the limitless divine perfections to your individual I-ness

76 This is the abstract feminine noun from *anā* ('I'). For more details on I-ness (*anā'iyya*), and how it relates to *huwiyya* and *anniyya/inniyya*, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. "*Anniyya*."

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> that is restricted to [simply] viewing you, [so] it would necessitate veiling with restriction [His] limitlessness, for the divine *huwiyya* cannot be restricted by the instruction of this-ness (*hādhiyya*) and I-ness.[77]

The transgressors, al-Qāshānī tells us, are those who use their I-ness (*anā'iyya*) to veil themselves from the boundless manifestations of God in the Cosmos, a manifestation of which they themselves are the most vivid example. Here, then, I-ness (*anā'iyya*) is much like *anāniyya*, an intentional act on the part of the existent to limit and misattribute the infiniteness of the divine *huwiyya* by viewing it as a manifestation of his own I-ness. It is telling that "individual *huwiyya*" could quite easily replace "individual I-ness" in this passage without loss of meaning since al-Qāshānī means by I-ness (*anā'iyya*) the creational *huwiyya* that inhibits true gnosis of and annihilation in the divine *huwiyya*. Al-Qāshānī regards the creational *huwiyya* as a barrier that needs to be overcome if true annihilation is to be achieved, for personal *huwiyya* has no place and no positive function if everything is simply the manifestation of the divine *huwiyya*.

Al-Qāshānī asserts that the result of veiling oneself with his I-ness is that he attributes the innumerable divine perfections to himself and his existential form. Only seeing himself as creational perfection, without being conscious that his form is nothing but one manifestation of the divine *huwiyya*, means that he curtails the divine perfection because he deems it to be just what is apparent from his existence, which "necessitate[s] veiling [His] limitlessness with restriction." It is the imposition of "this-ness" (*hādhiyya*), that is, delimiting the infinite manifestations of the divine *huwiyya* to "this" or "that" specifically, which misses the point entirely. Indeed, al-Qashānī believes that

> attempts to declare God transcendent beyond any sensible form delimit God and even liken him (*tashbih*) to nonsensible, spiritual forms. Attempts to declare God free of any limitation whatsoever, in fact, limit him by this very declaration, by nonlimitation. This difficulty cannot be evaded by moving away from *tanzih* just as declarations of transcendence limit God, so, too, do affirmations of immanence.[78]

In his commentary of chapter 21, al-Qāshānī again enlists *huwiyya* in order to describe people who are ignorant of the true reality. The Qur'an tells of

77 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:259.

78 Sharify-Funk and Rory-Dickson, "Traces of Pantheism in Islam," 152.

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Ibrāhīm's debates with his father and people; when the only justification they offer for idolatry is that they found their forefathers doing the same thing, Ibrāhīm proclaims that they are

> *In manifest error*, in being veiled from the illuminated Truth, not reaching the entity of essence (*ʿayn al-dhāt*), clinging [simply] to the isthmuses of the attributes, not being guided to the reality of unity (*ḥaqīqat al-aḥadiyya*) and submergence in the sea of *huwiyya*.[79]

Now it may be urged that the author is merely categorizing these people as not being submerged in the sea of *huwiyya*, as opposed to those who are.[80] But it still spotlights al-Qāshānī's penchant for using the term for people who are veiled from the truth, those who simply adhere to the superficiality of the Attributes without fathoming the underlying reality. *Huwiyya* as a state, as a station, as a rank, and as an ultimate goal, then, is just as significant in negative terms as it is in positive ones since most people will never attain this celebrated position.

3.13 Huwiyya *and Divine Guidance*

Eschewing formulations of intrinsic ranks and primordial preparednesses in the aforementioned passage, al-Qāshānī educes sentiments of guidance to the "reality of unity (*ḥaqīqat al-aḥadiyya*)"[81] and "submergence in the sea of *huwiyya*." So how do the two relate to and associate with one another? And who calls the shots? Is it the preparedness that determines whether one is submerged in the sea of *huwiyya* or divine guidance? Is there even a difference between the two? The answer, as ever, is both yes and no. Preparedness is unlike divine guidance inasmuch as it is the primordial limit of any given existent. Divine guidance, therefore, does not enter into the equation. It is simply something that is the way it is. The two, on the other hand, are synonymous as it is divine guidance that leads to the preparedness, and the existent, with its own specific preparedness, is the manifestation of the divine *huwiyya*. It is thus as much an offshoot of the Names as the form of the existent.

So the intrinsic rank of an existent may be looked upon in terms of its preparedness or the divine guidance that has led it to its individual station. Moral responsibility is in no way erased by this dynamic because it is only through

79 Al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 1:377.

80 See examples above.

81 For a detailed examination of this term see above.

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toiling that one reaches one's destined station, the upper limit of one's potential. But, though divine guidance causes an individual's preparedness, it is still under the sway of that preparedness, even as it has given rise to it. Thus we have a complex dynamic where divine guidance at once leads to and is constrained by preparedness.[82]

This concept is deftly dealt with by al-Qāshānī in his commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ*:

> The intrinsic, unseen manifestation bestows eternal preparedness (*al-istiʿdād al-azalī*) by the appearance of the Essence in the realm of the unseen in the forms of the archetypes, and that which pertains to each one of the archetypes in terms of their states. This is what is revealed to the heart [of the gnostic] in the state of manifestation in the phenomenal world. The absolute unseen (*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*), the absolute Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muṭlaqa*) and the absolute *huwiyya* (*al-huwiyya al-muṭlaqa*) is that by which the Truth describes Himself; it is this essence manifested in the forms of the archetypes, each archetype having a specific *huwiyya* by which it is as it is. The Truth continues to be "He" forever as when the archetypes are manifest in the phenomenal world and the heart [of the gnostic] receives this natural preparedness (*al-istiʿdād al-fiṭrī*), which is bestowed upon it by the manifestation [of the divine] in the phenomenal world [that is] the phenomenal manifestation (*al-tajallī al-shuhūdī*), he sees Him in the form of his preparedness, and it is what a group of Sufis mean when they say, "The Truth manifests Himself in accordance with the preparedness of the servant."[83]

Al-Qāshānī explains that God remains constant and unchanging, but everyone has a different appreciation of Him, in accordance with his "natural preparedness" (*al-istiʿdād al-fiṭrī*). He refers to the unknown God by the terms "the absolute unseen (*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*), the absolute Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muṭlaqa*) and the absolute *huwiyya* (*al-huwiyya al-muṭlaqa*)," observing that "it is this essence manifested in the forms of the archetypes." Therefore, it cannot be the unknowable, remote God since "the archetypes are manifest in the phe-

82 One perceives hues of the tortured conciliation between the inherent antimony of determinism and free-will, of divine omnipotence and creaturely contingency, proposed by a contemporary of al-Qāshānī, John Wyclif. Unfairly anointed an arch-Ockham determinist, Wyclif also advocated a nuanced two-way relationship where the existence of the contingent being, in a sense, determines the divine volition that caused its existence.

83 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūs*, 216–217.

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nomenal world." As hidden as these archetypes may be, they are still a means by which the divine essence is communicated in the sensible world, and it is this reality that "the heart [of the gnostic] receives," not the ability to intuit the unknowable God that we are acquainted with in the chapter of Shuʿayb.

Each archetype, says the disciple, has its own *huwiyya* "by which it is as it is," and in the form of which, he sees God. The existent thus sees God "in the form of his preparedness," which does not mean that guidance has no place, for al-Qāshānī continues:

> As for guidance in His statement, *then He guided*,[84] it is the lifting of the veil between Him and His servant until he sees Him in the form of his belief. For the Truth, according to him, *is* his belief, since neither the heart nor the eye sees anything except the form of his belief in the Truth; so he sees not save himself in the mirror of the Truth. Thus, from these archetypes, whoever has complete preparedness, his preparedness will necessitate that he sees the Truth in all the infinite forms of His Names because his preparedness is not restricted to the form of some Name; rather, it accepts every plane (*ḥaḍra*) of the planes of Names in, and by which, are manifested to him what is in himself in terms of how he is connected through this plane to the Truth, unfettered by any restrictions. So this is the gnostic mentioned [in this passage], whose heart is always in the form of what is manifested to it in any form or aspect that it is manifested.[85]

So divine guidance leads to the preparedness being what it is. It is He who lifts "the veil between Him and His servant until he sees Him in the form of his belief." It is He who determines the preparedness so that a person sees himself "in the mirror of the Truth." But it is only the gnostics who have a "complete preparedness" who see God in all the innumerable manifestations of the Cosmos because it is only their preparedness that "is not restricted to the form of some Name; rather, it accepts every plane (*ḥaḍra*) of the planes of Names." The gnostics, therefore, can be fully led by divine guidance to the true reality of multiplicity in divine oneness because their preparedness has the capacity to harness the guidance that gave rise to them in the first place. A lesser preparedness will lack this facility and will curtail divine guidance, though it is that very guidance that created them.

84 Qurʾan, 20:50.

85 Al-Qāshanī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūs*, 216–217.

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Reluctant to play the myrmidon, al-Qāshānī seems perceptibly more concerned with maintaining orthopraxy than his predecessor. He retains some of the determinism of his forerunner, but in his conception, the preparedness that every existent is bequeathed is by no means attained. Only through punctilious adherence to divine commands are the veils removed, the ranks ascended and the predetermined preparedness achieved. Duncan MacDonald articulates this distinction between the two mystics in the following manner:

> Abd ar-Razzaq did not follow his master absolutely. On the freedom of the will especially he left him. For Ibn Arabi, the doctrine of the oneness of all things had involved fatalism. Whatever happens is determined by the nature of things, that is, by the nature of God. So the individuals are bound by the whole. Abd ar-Razzaq turned this round. His pantheism was of the same type as that of Ibn Arabi; God, for him, was all. But there is freedom of the divine nature, he went on. It must therefore exist in man also, for he is an emanation from the divine. His every act, it is true, is predetermined, in time, in form, and in place. But his act is brought about by certain causes, themselves predetermined. These are what we would call natural laws in things, natural abilities, aptitudes, etc., in the agent; finally, free choice itself. And that free choice is in man because he is of and from God. Further, it is evident that Abd ar-Razzaq's anxiety is to preserve a basis for morals. Among the predetermining causes he reckons the divine commands, warnings, proofs in the Qur'an. The guidance of religion finds thus its place and the prophets their work.[86]

It is true that al-Qāshānī captions this issue more boldly than does Ibn ʿArabī, and this aligns him more closely with the orthodoxy, because as Van Ess writes, "For Islam, orthopraxy is more important than orthodoxy. At the level of action, in the liturgy and in daily life, details counted a great deal."[87] But it is folly to suggest Ibn ʿArabī's outlook is entirely fatalistic. Indeed, the foregoing shows that Ibn ʿArabi, too, believes in orthopraxy as a vehicle for attainment of man's true potential. If al-Qāshānī is more fastidious in accentuating this point, then it is only because it handsomely serves his irenic endeavors.[88]

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86 Duncan B. MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology*, 271.

87 Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 16.

88 For more details on al-Qāshānī's view on free-will and predestination, see al-Qāshānī, *Al-Risāla fi'l-qaḍā' wa'l-qadar* (*Traité sur la prédestination et le libre arbitre*), trans. Stanislas Guyard. A good example of al-Qāshānī's more stringent adherence to the significance of orthopraxy is the fate of Pharaoh: though he accepts the account in Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ*

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Returning to the commentary of chapter 21, we observe the interchangeability of the terms *huwiyya* and *aḥadiyya*, a detailed discussion of which has been given. What is more interesting is the contrast between these terms and what al-Qāshānī calls "the isthmuses of the attributes," to which the veiled person clings. Al-Qāshānī draws a distinction between realizing that all things in the Cosmos are manifestations of the divine *huwiyya* or *aḥadiyya*, and seeing them as a manifestation of the Names. The nuance between these two states is vital because, though everything is a manifestation of the Names, the Names emanate from the divine *huwiyya* or *aḥadiyya*. Anyone who sees the Cosmos as a manifestation of the Names, but does not recognize the Names as differentiations of the *huwiyya* has only descried the partial truth. The reason al-Qāshānī calls these Names isthmuses (*barāzikh*) is because they are the connecting filament between the creation and the divine, but to attribute the Cosmos to them alone, without acknowledging the divine differentiations before them, is to be veiled from the truth.

The only remaining place where reference to guidance to the *huwiyya* is made, without any mention of preparedness or *inniya*, is when al-Qāshānī attends to the episode of Mūsā presenting Pharaoh the portents of his prophethood:[89]

> *So he* [*Mūsā*] *showed him* [*i.e. Pharoah*] *the great sign*, that is, the *huwiyya* pertaining to the reality (*al-huwiyya al-ḥaqīqiyya*) with the rational oneness (*al-tawḥīd al-ʿilmī*) and the guidance of the reality (*al-hidāya al-ḥaqqāniyya*).[90]

The great sign, according to the author, is "the *huwiyya* pertaining to the reality (*al-huwiyya al-ḥaqīqiyya*)." God accoutered Mūsā with two things that allowed him to appreciate this sign: "rational oneness (*al-tawḥīd al-ʿilmī*) and the guidance of the reality (*al-hidāya al-ḥaqqāniyya*)." God, says al-Qāshānī, guided Mūsā to the reality of His *huwiyya* and also made His oneness, despite its multiplicity, congenial to his faculty of rationality. The guidance, again, is both direction to the *huwiyya* and instillation of preparedness. The faculty of ration-

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(the account in the *Futūḥāt* is different) and believes in the last-breath faith of Pharaoh, he nevertheless concedes that Pharaoh will suffer punishment for his treatment of the Israelites. Carl W. Ernst, "Controversies over Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ*," 262. See also Lory, *Les commentaires*, 93–98.

89 This refers to Mūsā's miracles in traditional Sunni commentaries. See al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, 19:131.

90 Al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 2:667.

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ality, on the other hand, is subsumed under preparedness as it is through reason that he realizes what the *huwiyya* truly is. Familiar vestiges of the Ibn ʿArabian tightrope between rationality and gnosis, or rather, gnosis as a form of rationality, is here adumbrated.

Al-Qāshānī praises rationality as God's oneness is something that is "rational," but it is only through guidance in the form of, among other things, preparedness that secures gnosis of the divine *huwiyya*. From a different angle, though, it is only through the preparedness to rationally contemplate God's *huwiyya* that gnosis of it derives. The two are thus tightly woven in an intricate lattice, each having its own function, being dependent as well as independent, distinct as well as the same.

3.14 Huwiyya *and the Last Day*

Divine guidance and preparedness in a complex coalition set up and are responsible for the ultimate potential of man; it is a potential that may be actualized in the phenomenal world, but must be assessed on the Last Day. Limning a portrait of the Last Day in his commentary of chapter 39, al-Qāshānī writes:

> *And the horn will be blown*, at the slaying (*imāta*) by the spirit of the Truth and His manifestation in everything, and the witnessing of His self by His self and the annihilation of everything in Him. *So will swoon*, that is, be destroyed, *everything that is in the heavens and the Earth*, in a state of annihilation in oneness (*tawḥīd*), and the *huwiyya* will be manifested by the spiritual breath, *save him who God wills*, of the people of subsistence (*ahl al-baqāʾ*), those whom God has revivified after their annihilation in the Truthful existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqqānī*). So they will not die again at the Resurrection as their life is in Him and they have been annihilated from their selves before. *Then it is blown again*, upon subsistence after annihilation and the return to differentiation after union.[91]

At the moment the sensible Cosmos comes to an end by the blowing of the horn, says al-Qāshānī, "the slaying (*imāta*) by the spirit of the Truth" will occur. By this he means the manifestation of God in every existent thing will be reversed, as we see from his explicative conjunction succeeding the phrase. The sound of the horn will thus bring an end to all the tangible differentiations of the divine *huwiyya* so that God will no longer view "His self by His self,"

91 Ibid., 2:508.

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that is, He will no longer see Himself in that which is other than He because of "the annihilation of everything in Him," so all the differentiations of His *huwiyya* will return to Him just as they emanated from Him. One almost feels the echo of Ibn ʿArabī's cherished refrain "*and to Him returns the matter in its entirety*."[92]

Al-Qāshānī then uses plainer language to express this "annihilation in oneness" (*fanāʾ fiʾl-tawḥīd*) and "manifestation of the divine *huwiyya*." More lucid and more comprehensible, the first of these phrases underlines the mystic's point that when everything will be destroyed, it will not simply perish, but shall return to God, just as it came from Him.[93] The second phrase, which conveys that this return to God actually exposes the divine *huwiyya*, is more arcane, but no less logical in the context of what a reversion of differentiated forms of the *huwiyya* necessitates. For when the differentiations of the *huwiyya* return back to it, nothing remains but the undifferentiated *huwiyya* from which they first emanated. The divine *huwiyya* is thus exposed due to the removal of the veils of phenomenal existentiality in which it was cloaked.

It seems that at the end of the world, all the processes and differentiations that caused it to be will be actively reversed, such that even the spiritual breath (*al-nafkha al-rūḥiyya*), that is, the divine breath, which instigated the processes that led to the existence of the Cosmos, will bring about the undifferentiation that induces its end.[94] Indeed, we see that the "breath" (*nafkh*) is always seen

92 Qurʾan, 11:123.

93 One observes conformity with Ibn ʿArabī's notion of there being no net loss when it comes to God, as articulated in the chapter of Yūnūs, where Ibn ʿArabī writes:

> If it were that a dead or killed person—any dead or killed person—when they died or were killed, did not return to God, God would not ordain death for anyone nor would He advocate their execution. So everything is in His grasp, and there is no loss in terms of His right. The advocation of execution and the command of death is due to His knowledge that His servant cannot escape Him and he will return to Him, as attested by His saying, *And unto Him shall the whole matter be returned*, that is, all disposal lies with Him, and He is the Disposer. Surely, nothing proceeds from Him that is not His essence; rather, His *huwiyya* is the essence of that thing and that is what reveals to him [the Gnostic, the meaning] of His saying, *And unto Him shall the whole matter be returned*. (Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 170.)

Ibn ʿArabī speaks of the cyclical nature of existence in this passage, with everything emanating from and returning to God. He rationalizes the seemingly arbitrary dispensation of life and death stating that, since the return of all existents is to God, it is merely a transition from one plane of existence to another, and existence itself persists. Al-Qāshānī, too, speaks of the return of everything to God, almost as an undifferentiation to undo the first outpouring that gave rise to the Cosmos.

94 Parallels can be observed between the active reversal from a life-giving breath to a life-taking one, in this case with that of the prophet ʿĪsā—himself a sign of the Day of

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as a differentiating, existentiating force in al-Qāshānī's commentary, until it comes to the Last Day. Al-Qāshānī writes in his commentary of chapter 12:

> For surely God, the Exalted, does not give life to the people of sainthood (*wilāya*) upon absolute annihilation (*al-fanā' al-tāmm*), which is the beginning of prophethood, except by means of His breath (*nafkh*) and His revelation; and by association with these, the differentiations become manifest in the spring of union.[95]

One of the two chief ways by which God gives life to the people of sainthood is through His breath. It is the divine breath that causes the differentiations, and it is this very breath that retracts the same differentiations on the Last Day.

The only people who will not die on the Last Day will be the gnostics who have achieved complete annihilation in the divine *huwiyya* because "God has revivified [them] after their annihilation in the Truthful existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqqānī*)." The "Truthful existence" (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqqānī*) is existence that is real as it emanates from the eternally and absolutely existent being. "So they will not die again at the Resurrection as their life is in Him and they have been annihilated from their selves before."

In the view of al-Qāshānī, subsistence (*baqā'*) is represented by the resurrection of everything when the horn is blown again. This is "subsistence after annihilation and the return to differentiation after union." The second blowing of the horn recreates the differentiation that the first repeals. But it is not a simple reversion to the pre-apocalyptic differentiation; rather, it is a differentiation after annihilation and union in the divine *huwiyya*, with all that that entails and signifies, to wit, the subsistence of the annihilation-derived gnosis, just as was the case for Yūsuf when God returned him to sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) after his annihilation.

3.15 Huwiyya *and the Forgiveness of God*

We have just seen how *huwiyya* is drafted to describe gnostics who are annihilated in the divine *huwiyya* and, before that, to describe transgressors of God's laws who are veiled from that very *huwiyya*. We now turn to a use of the term that allows and enables the unworthy to relate to the *huwiyya*, thereby bridging the divide between these two classes. This connective filament is the forgiveness of God.

Judgement—whose life-giving breath (Qur'an, 3:39) shall be transformed into a life-taking one upon his second coming. (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 55:110.)

95 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:270.

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The commentary of the following verse of chapter 47, in which God describes the rewards for the righteous, is most pertinent for our purposes:

> *A likeness of the garden promised the God-fearing* [*is this*]*: in it are rivers of water unpolluted; and rivers of milk, the taste of which will not alter; and rivers of wine, delicious for drinkers; and rivers of purified honey; and for them will be every kind of fruit; and forgiveness from their Lord.*[96]

In his commentary of this verse, al-Qāshānī writes:

> *And forgiveness from their Lord*, by concealment of the aspects of disobedience and veiling the evils of vices for the people of milk. Then also by concealment of the actions of the people of water. Then by eradication of the attributes for the people of honey and some of the people of wine. Then by effacement of the sins of the states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*), and the annihilation of the remainder, and screening their manifestations by the light and revelations for the people of fruit. Then by annihilation of the essence (*dhāt*) by submergence in the union of unity (*jamʿ al-aḥadiyya*) and perishing in the spring of *huwiyya* (*ʿayn al-huwiyya*) for the drinkers of pure wines (*al-khumūr al-ṣirfī*), and all of these are types of the god-fearing [believers].[97]

Interestingly, al-Qāshānī interprets all the rewards in the gardens of paradise as being subsumed under the final one: forgiveness from God. The water, the milk, the wine and the honey that will be offered people are not beverages, then, but bespoke strains of forgiveness. Yet it seems somewhat curious that all these classes of people are offered personalized forgiveness when al-Qāshānī states they are all "types of the God-fearing [believers]." The only reconciliation between these statements is that, though they are all types of God-fearing believers, they have still transgressed to differing degrees and are thus in need of forgiveness from God.[98]

96 Qur'an, 47:15.

97 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:556.

98 This is different to the classification of men generally, for al-Qāshānī, like many of his predecessors, divided men into three categories, as MacDonald notes: "The first is of men of the world, who are ruled by the flesh (*nafs*) and who live careless of all religion. The second is of men of reason (*aql*). They through their reason contemplate God, but see only His external attributes. The third is of men of the spirit (*ruh*) who, in ecstasy, see God face to face in His very essence, which is the substrate of all creation." MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology*, 272.

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Al-Qāshānī favors not a sweeping forgiveness that is blind to the transgressions of its beneficiaries; the forgiveness of God, says the mystic, elevates each class according to his rank. So, for the people at the lower end of the spectrum—the people of water and milk—forgiveness entails concealing their vices and transgressions. Whereas those at the other end—the people of pure wine—forgiveness means "annihilation of the essence (*dhāt*) by submergence in the union of unity (*jamʿ al-aḥadiyya*) and perishing in the spring of *huwiyya* (*ʿayn al-huwiyya*)." It is they, then, who reach the highest level of gnosis because their accomplishments in the world furnishes them with a head start. In this way, both the mercy and justice of God is presented and preserved.

4 Conclusion of *Huwiyya* in al-Qāshānī's Works

Nebulous and pliable, *huwiyya* is employed by al-Qāshānī in many contexts and in many ways. But if *huwiyya* is somewhat amorphous, then it is still distinct enough to have a thread that runs through all its various usages in the *Taʾwīlāt*, an Izutsuian basic meaning that we may adhere to and to which all its relational meanings may be referred. This meaning is of two kinds and may be better articulated as two symbols:

1. A symbol for God's absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), as opposed to the relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*) of the creation.
2. A symbol of the primary differentiation of God, that is, the unknown God (but not the unknowable God) who is predisposed towards creation.

In his commentary of chapter 45, al-Qāshānī writes:

> I swear by the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*), that is, absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), which is the source of everything and the essence of union (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*), and by Muḥammad, that is, relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), which is the perfection of everything and a detailed form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*).

This single quotation combines the two main facets of *huwiyya* which are played out in their numerous guises throughout the *Taʾwīlāt*. First, al-Qashānī affirms that the divine *huwiyya* is "absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*)," something that distinguishes God from everything else. It is the one trait that can be applied to God alone. This, in many ways, is the most fundamental definition of *huwiyya* because it articulates what *huwiyya* is in isolation, without reference to creation or anything else. It is what *huwiyya* may primarily be conceived of. What follows is the designation of *huwiyya* in the context of cre-

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ation. Al-Qāshānī comments that divine *huwiyya* is "the source of everything" because all existents derive their *huwiyya* from it. This means that all allusions to creational *huwiyyāt* in their various manifestations ultimately emanate from this one. A corollary of this is that while the *huwiyyāt* of created entities can only be either "this" or "that," the *huwiyya* of God that gives rise to these numerous creational *huwiyyāt* is liberated from this haecceity. This, while seeming like another distinction between the divine *huwiyya* and the creational one, is merely a logical consequence of the former giving rise to the latter.

We are further informed that, not only is the divine *huwiyya* the source of everything, but it is "the essence of union (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*)." So all subsequent references to annihilation in God, to submergence in the sea or spring of *huwiyya*, are articulations of this primary definition. When expressed in this manner, it is not so much the *huwiyya* itself that is being detailed, but rather a station where an awareness and appreciation of the divine *huwiyya* is acquired by the gnostic who sees through the façade of phenomenality and to the *huwiyya* behind it all.

Al-Qāshānī then speaks of Muḥammad as the emblem of relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), "which is the perfection of everything and a detailed form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*)" of the divine *huwiyya*. The Perfect Man, therefore, is the comprehensive amalgamation of all the Names and a "detailed form," that is, a differentiated version of the divine outpouring, through which the divine *huwiyya* is known to the creation. This means the difference between God and the Perfect Man is not only that God has absolute existence and the Perfect Man has contingent existence, it is also that the divine *huwiyya* is a representation of how God is unknown—though not unknowable—to creation, and the Perfect Man is a symbol of how God is known to the creation.

Through characterizing the Perfect Man as the "detailed form" of the divine *huwiyya*, al-Qāshānī also alludes to the second basic meaning of *huwiyya*: God after the first differentiation when there is a prefiguring of pouring forth existence. There can, after all, be no "detailed form" if there is no predisposition towards creation. We are thus left with three interrelated yet distinct concepts: the divine *huwiyya*, which is God unknown, the absolutely existent, who is predisposed to creating a being that has the capacity to manifest all of His Names so that He may be known. Second, the Names themselves, which are the manner in which God is known. And finally, a comprehensive outlook of God in which the concepts of the divine *huwiyya* and that of the Perfect Man are looked upon in unison and God is seen as the unknown in terms of His *huwiyya* and known in terms of the differentiated result of that very *huwiyya*—the Perfect Man.

All this, of course, does not diminish the essential unknowability of God, a God about whom nothing can be articulated or even fathomed. A terse yet

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comprehensive definition of *huwiyya*, in light of al-Qāshānī's usage of it in the *Taʾwīlāt*, would therefore be: it is a means of articulating the unknown, absolutely existent God while acknowledging both His true unknowability and insinuating His limited knowability by the contingently existent creation through expression of His Names.

5 The *Huwiyya* of Ibn ʿArabī versus the *Huwiyya* of al-Qāshānī

Tiny changes, claims Tolstoy, are the only ones that truly matter. True disciples, one might add, are those who only make tiny changes. Al-Qāshānī discreetly breaks ranks with his master in his usage of *huwiyya*. The differences, though tiny, are important—perhaps all the more important for being so tiny. Here we catalog these changes, and what they mean.

The definitions of *huwiyya* by both mystics are extremely alike, even if al-Qāshānī's is more detailed than that of Ibn ʿArabī's. For what Ibn ʿArabī laconically categorizes as "The Reality in the realm of the unseen,"[99] al-Qāshānī explains as "The absolute, comprehensive Reality … in the absolute unseen … for the absolute unseen, in terms of it being unseen, does not reach a point where it is ever witnessed."[100] Al-Qāshānī, therefore, already assumes the role of a commentator who unequivocally expresses what he deems to be the exact intentions of the author. In this definition, he seems to be referring to the remote, unknowable God—the true God who cannot be manifested or "witnessed" in the phenomenal realm or any other plane of creation. This is the primary signification of *huwiyya* in Ibn ʿArabī's semantic *Weltanschauung*, too, as we learn from the chapter of Shuʿayb in the *Fuṣūṣ*.[101]

The two mystics are agreed, then, that *huwiyya* is fundamentally the remote, unknowable God. However, al-Qāshānī's usage in the *Taʾwīlāt* and elsewhere does not correspond with this assessment. For we note that the absolute Reality to which al-Qāshānī refers in the *Taʾwīlāt* and his lexicons is not the remote, undifferentiated God, but rather God after the first differentiation when there is a prefiguring of existence. He is still unseen, His reality still comprehensive because if nothing has yet emanated from Him, it is latent within Him, and He is still far removed from the existence of any onlookers who are many differentiations away, but there is already a rift between master and disciple.

99 Ibn ʿArabī, *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 538.
100 Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.
101 See above.

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This is not to suggest that al-Qāshānī would dispute *huwiyya* could be used for the remote God, it is just to say that he does not generally use it in such a way, which tells us he is far more reticent about employing the term for the Absolute in His Absoluteness than Ibn ʿArabī. This necessarily means that al-Qāshānī's treatment of *huwiyya* is already impoverished and narrow—he does not commonly avail himself of the full spectrum of significations, largely overlooking the most important denotation—that of the unknowable God.

Al-Qāshānī, it is true, comes very close to Ibn ʿArabī in his meanings of *huwiyya* and this is reflected in his agreement with his master that *huwiyya* is almost a byword for the absolute existence of God as opposed to the contingent existence of the creation—an assertion most forthrightly articulated in the commentary of chapter 45. But this distinction does not do away with or impinge on the underlying difference between the conception of the unknowable God and that of the unknown God, that is, God after the first differentiation, as it could equally be applied to both.

Both mystics agree on the other end of the spectrum in regard to the most differentiated form of *huwiyya* being not only the existents of the phenomenal world, but their very actions, as they too are manifestations of God. But even in this accord we see a difference in formulation, for what Ibn ʿArabī leaves undefined, merely intimating it through his rich and varied reflections, notably in the chapter of Shuʿayb, al-Qāshānī categorizes as unity of action (*al-aḥadiyya al-fiʿliyya*).

We also observe that whereas the disciple is explicit in defining this differentiated form of *huwiyya* in his *Laṭāʾif*, the term is never employed in the *Taʾwīlāt*. True to form, al-Qāshānī again defines a term in his lexicon without invoking it in his commentary. Working under the stringent yoke of the commentary genre, which curtails metaphysical disquisitions, may be culpable for this. It could also be that the *Laṭāʾif* was meant for a different audience,[102] or that his definiteness of style and bluntness of expression exposes al-Qāshānī to contradictions that Ibn ʿArabī circumvents and transcends. One of these reasons, or, more likely, a fluctuating medley of all of them, means that despite acknowledging *huwiyya* as the absolutely unknowable God, al-Qāshānī restricts himself to the signification of the unknown God, for all his usages of the term pertain to the manner in which God is connected to and manifested in His creation, even if His existence is absolute and that of His creation contingent, and not how He, in His absoluteness, is not even fathomed by the creation.

102 See below for more details.

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Indeed, we see a distinct shift in emphasis in the invocation of the term between Ibn ʿArabī and his disciple: the former uses it primarily in reference to the dissociation of God from His creation, His unknowability, His lack of true manifestation, whereas the latter employs it to delineate how God is related to and expressed in His creation, even as he recognizes that its primary function is articulation of God's disconnection. This accentuation of association conduces to a mushrooming of *huwiyya* categories in the *Ta'wīlāt*, whether it be how man is submerged in the sea or spring of *huwiyya* (about which he is especially loquacious) or how *huwiyya* is linked to creational *inniya* and *anāniyya* or, even, how it pertains to divine guidance and eschatology. All these concepts, in their vague outlines and hazy blueprints, are present in Ibn ʿArabī's verbal fusillades, but they remain out of focus precisely because his focus lies elsewhere. Al-Qāshānī, in making the relationship between creator and creation the main purpose of his use of the term, sacrifices its primary denotation. Yet it may also be that al-Qāshānī views God as somehow being closer to His creation than does Ibn ʿArabī, that the emphasis on the ways in which creator and creation are connected constitutes a slender doctrinal difference between the master and disciple.

If the meaning of the unknowable God is downgraded by al-Qāshānī, then at the other end of the continuum, the most differentiated form of *huwiyya* being the actions of existents, does not escape unscathed. Al-Qāshānī, being textually tethered to the Qur'an, seems unable to extricate himself to properly address the dichotomy between God being everything and judging everyone; His being the actions of man, and His promise of reward and threat of punishment for the righteous and immoral, respectively.[103] Accordingly, he tries to avoid the issue and confines his scrutiny, for the most part, to the phenomenal loci of *huwiyya*, without entering the choppy waters of their actions. He does, on occasion, drift to this issue, but his engagement is as shallow as it is brief.[104]

The phraseology of al-Qāshānī, too, stands out; even though the same concepts are present in the works of Ibn ʿArabī, the master does not adopt nearly as many set phrases, such as "submergence in the sea of *huwiyya*" or "this-ness," as his successor. These phrases have the propensity to both enrich and impoverish the tradition. We see this in the work of the disciple where they create a lucidity which, though they make concepts more amenable to both laymen and Sufi

103 For a detailed analysis of how al-Qāshānī views this issue, see his work: *Al-Rīsāla fi'l-qaḍā' wa'l-qadar*.

104 See, for example, the section on *huwiyya* and divine guidance.

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neophytes alike, may not have been envisioned by the Andalusian. Moreover, lucidity has an onerous tariff; it comes at the expense of vibrancy of articulation and looseness of expression that allows Ibn ʿArabī the luxury of glossing over contradictions in the mélange of his linguistic virtuosity. These contradictions are ventilated by al-Qāshānī, which may be the reason for his timidity in exploring all the connotations his master intended.

Al-Qāshānī's role, however, is not restricted to one of systemization and formalization. He also develops and refines concepts and ideas introduced by Ibn ʿArabī. The *huwiyya* of God, for instance, says al-Qāshānī, has its own set of attributes that impart its "unknown-ness." This is distinct from the *huwiyya* when differentiated into an amalgamation of the divine Names that is the chief manner in which it is known to the existents. But this pre-differentiated, unrepresented, unknown *huwiyya* and its differentiated, manifested, known materialization exist *côte à côte*. This means that God is at once unknown—through His *huwiyya*, known—through His Names, *and* a mixture of the two. One finds faint hues of this notion in Ibn ʿArabī's suggestive excurses, especially in his adherence to emanational atemporality, but never is it so explicitly pronounced. The idea, too, that the *huwiyya* has its own set of attributes seems altogether al-Qāshānī's own. The way in which it is woven into the tortuous tapestry of Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics exemplifies how al-Qāshānī's spiritual insight manoeuvres in his Sufi predecessor's mystical framework.

Al-Qāshānī also analyzes notions that feature in the Andalusian's worldview from his own vantage point and in his own way. Creational *huwiyya*, a *huwiyya*, according to Ibn ʿArabī, derived from the divine *huwiyya*, and therefore a direct link to it, is decried by al-Qāshānī as a barrier to annihilation. It is true that both, though seemingly antithetical, are articulations of the same thing since conviction of personal *huwiyya* being distinct from and independent of the divine *huwiyya* is an obstacle to annihilation, which does not violate the creational *huwiyya* being a direct connection to it. Revealingly, al-Qāshānī, far from following Ibn ʿArabī's lead in solely proclaiming creational *huwiyya*'s positive aspect as a straight route to the divine, underlines its negative one as an obstruction to it.

Though al-Qāshānī differs sometimes and somewhat in his comprehension and adoption of *huwiyya*, it is nevertheless consonant with Ibn ʿArabī's usage most of the time. So we have similar allusions to the interplay between *huwiyya* and preparedness, and between *huwiyya* and divine mercy; the station of *huwiyya*, too, appears to be straddling the same general line, among many others. It is merely al-Qāshānī's antiseptic style and clinical communication that displays the points of divergence and conceals those of convergence. Indeed, from definition to application, one sees only nuanced differences, a

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shift in emphasis here, a drift in meaning there. Put together, though, we end up with a term which, though not unrecognizable from its erstwhile incarnation, is quite a different proposition.

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CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

"I agree with no one's opinion," writes Ivan Turgenev, "I have some of my own." Al-Qāshānī, unlike the Russian aesthete, broadly agrees with the opinions of Ibn ʿArabī, but he has some of his own, too. However, these opinions never explicitly clash with or differ from those of his master.[1] His purpose is not to question his predecessor's thought and ideas,[2] it is merely to explain them as he understands them. This is his self-proclaimed objective in *Sharḥ fuṣūs* where he states that his aim is to "not conceal anything from the jewels of his (Ibn ʿArabī's) treasures"[3] and to "decode the words of the book as much as God allows me."[4] He further petitions God to safeguard him from the machinations of his intellect if it compels him to deviate from the truth.[5] It is true, of course, that such declarations are *de rigueur* for the commentary genre. But the reverential tone and disinclination to even challenge Ibn ʿArabī's spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) disclose that al-Qāshānī's aims are not mere faux modesty, but sincere goals.

He views his role as a systematizer of Ibn ʿArabī's thought primarily, and of Sufism generally, as evidenced by his lexicons which go from expounding concepts in just three works in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*,[6] to all of Ibn ʿArabī's writings in *Rashḥ*, and finally, the whole gamut of Sufi thought in the *Laṭāʾif*. It is little wonder, then, that his approach is more term-centric than that of his forerunner. But al-Qāshānī, due to operating in a far more rigid system—firstly because of his style, which is much more clinical and direct than that of Ibn ʿArabī, and secondly because of the *tafsīr* and lexicon genres, which curtail any digressions and demand that any expositions capitulate to the text or entry—paradoxically explores fewer of the meanings than his master. This may also be

1 Al-Qāshānī's position on predestination, *prima facie*, appears at odds with that of Ibn ʿArabī. But upon closer examination, we see that it is simply a more robust defense of orthopraxy—something that is present in his master's works and, more importantly, deeds. This issue, nevertheless, is beyond the scope of this study. See also the section on *huwiyya* and divine guidance.

2 Al-Jīlī, on the other hand, openly questions and refutes Ibn ʿArabī's assertions. See al-Jīlī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil*.

3 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣuṣ*, 3.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 These are *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, his commentary of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*. See introduction for more details.

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because his fidelity to the more conventional meanings obligates him to forego the fringe significations for fear that they would compromise or impinge on the former.

Yet the main reason for al-Qāshānī's condensed version is the very reason why his language and style differ so dramatically from his master: his audience is different from that of Ibn ʿArabī.[7] Whereas the Andalusian addresses Sufi specialists and obscures his language for lay folk, exotericists and mystic neophytes,[8] al-Qāshānī tailors his approach precisely for these Sufi trainees.[9] And so his works become multi-level esoteric manuals that concentrate on absolute beginners up to, but not including, the adepts Ibn ʿArabī targets, as is evident from the introduction to the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *Rashḥ*[10] and the *Taʾwīlāt* in which he describes the work as:

> A sample (*anmūdhaj*) for the people of spiritual tasting (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wijdān*), which they may imitate when they recite the Qurʾan so that its hidden knowledge may be unveiled for them in accordance with

7 The audience and era naturally *determines* what the author writes. Al-Qāshānī writes in the manner he does because he does not seek to address Sufi adepts as does Ibn ʿArabī. Skinner articulates this point particularly well when he remarks, "The essential question which we … confront, in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance." Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 48–49.

8 The reason for the inscrutability of Ibn ʿArabī's language, according to ʿAfifī, is a conscious effort on the part of the author to complicate his mode of expression in order to insulate him from the orthodoxy and insulate the mystic neophytes from him. ʿAfifī remarks, "It is not improbable that ibn ʿArabi made a deliberate effort to complicate the style … in order to conceal his ideas from the narrow-minded orthodox and the uninitiated." (ʿAfifi, "Ibn ʿArabī," 403.) He cites Ibn ʿArabī's own admission that he has hidden the secret of his metaphysics in his works as proof of this assertion, commenting, "It is extraordinary that he admits that he has intentionally concealed his special theory by scattering its component parts throughout his books and left the task of assembling it to the intelligent reader." (Ibid., 405.) De Cillis makes a similar point when she writes, "Ibn ʿArabī's works are made deliberately confused as they were meant to be understood exclusively by minds already trained in and acquainted with Sufi propositions." (De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 168.)

9 Michel Vâlsan, *Les interprétations ésotériques du Coran*, ix.

10 See introduction. The objective of the *Laṭāʾif* is different: it is to defend Sufism as a whole and the intended readership is therefore chiefly exotericists. This is why al-Qāshānī is far more expressive in this work and far less dependent on Ibn ʿArabī than in the other three works mentioned above. The pedagogical slant is there, but it is less prominent as the *Laṭāʾif* is more about defending than training. See below.

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> their preparedness, and its secrets of the unseen may be revealed to them in accordance with their capacity.[11]

James Morris is correct, then, in his assertion that

> Kāshānī's works in general … are extremely helpful pedagogical tools, for those previously unacquainted with Ibn ʿArabī's outlook and terminology, in bringing out some of his key concepts and technical vocabulary.[12]

He continues in the same vein:

> Kāshānī's Qurʾanic commentaries, like his other books, are all clearly distinguished by a thoroughgoing pedagogical concern and didactic procedure that is manifested in such interrelated characteristics as their rigorous systematization, the clarification and simplification of vocabulary (especially if compared with Ibn ʿArabī), and the conceptualization (often in an openly reductionist manner) of what were originally multivalent symbols.[13]

However, he attributes this tendency not only to the edification of trainee Sufis, but also to

> a shift in the content and underlying intentions of Kāshānī's writing (when compared with Ibn ʿArabī) that brought him very close to the prevailing systems of Avicennan philosophy (especially in their interpretations of the phenomena and claims of Sufism) and related schools of kalam—to such a degree that their verbal formulations are sometimes virtually indistinguishable.[14]

The reason al-Qāshānī turns Ibn ʿArabī's mystical outlook into a philosophical thought, according to Morris, is that he tries to "explain the insights of Ibn ʿArabī to students with a philosophic background, with the aim of drawing

11 Al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 6. This is why al-Qāshānī is so scrupulous about emphasizing the differing spiritual states of Sufis right from the outset and creates a work that continually refers to them. See Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries*, 76–77. Indeed, the emphasis on different preparednesses is an aspect that permeates most of al-Qāshānī's *oeuvre*. (For yet another example of this, see al-Qāshānī, *Manāzil*, 14.)

12 James Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 4.

13 Ibid., 5–6.

14 Ibid.

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them into the practical efforts necessary to realize the more profound intentions of Ibn ʿArabī."[15] He is especially qualified to do this, given his extensive philosophical training.[16]

Nevertheless, al-Qāshānī, in the introduction of the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *Rashḥ* and the *Taʾwīlāt* declares that his purpose is to educate Sufi novices, those who believe but do not understand fully all the complexities and nuances of Ibn ʿArabī's worldview, and not, as Morris claims, "toward convincing readers with a similar *falsafa* or kalam training (rather than toward the spiritual direction of already practicing Sufis)."[17] The only exception to this is the *Laṭāʾif*, which is intended more for exotericists than trainee mystics.[18] It is not, though, intended to turn the metaphysics of Ibn ʿArabī into a philosophical system for students of the *kalām* or *falsafa* tradition, but has the much broader aim of defending Sufism, and not just Ibn ʿArabī, against the onslaught of exotericists. As such, the reliance of al-Qāshānī particularly in this work on the Qurʾan and Ḥadīth is prominent, as is his relative independence of Ibn ʿArabī when compared with the other two lexicons.

It is true that al-Qāshānī's approach is a "'rational' philosophic exposition"[19] of Ibn ʿArabī's works and contains none of the "outbursts of mystic emotion"[20] of his master, and that Ibn ʿArabī's "insistence on the primary role of *kashf* (immediate experiential 'unveiling') and the concomitant limitations of abstract, formal 'reasoning' (*ʿaql*) have been substantially altered, if not indeed reversed, in Kāshānī's far more sober philosophic perspective,"[21] but that is the role he adopts as commentator. His purpose is to explain the spiritual unveiling of Ibn ʿArabī, not articulate his own. This does not mean, however, that he does not also rely on his own spiritual unveiling, as we have repeatedly seen. Additionally, many of Avicenna's ideas and much of his nomenclature had found

15 Ibid., 6.

16 Ibid., part II-A, 38–39; Chittick also notes this propensity of al-Qāshānī, remarking, "Given his early philosophical training, it is not surprising that his *Fuṣūṣ* commentary accentuates the trend established by Qūnawī to present the text in philosophical terms. The manner in which Kāshānī's approach differs from Ibn ʿArabī is especially obvious in his *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*." (Chittick, "The School of Ibn ʿArabī," 518.)

17 Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7. It is true that in al-Qāshānī's time, many learned Sufis would have also studied philosophical *kalām*. However, Morris argues that it was only students of *falsafa* and *kalām* who were al-Qāshānī's primary audience, which is contradicted by al-Qāshānī's own assertion that it was practicing Sufis who may or may not have studied these sciences.

18 See introduction.

19 Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7.

20 ʿAfīfī, "Ibn Arabī," 412.

21 James Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7.

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such wide currency in al-Qāshānī's time that even those, like al-Simnānī, who openly castigated Avicenna, still resorted to and made use of his ideas to some extent.[22]

Morris correctly observes that al-Qāshānī's works "demonstrate an originality and independence that makes them considerably more than [a] mere 'commentator' in any limited sense."[23] But he is guilty of conflating influence and intention, for al-Qāshānī was undoubtedly influenced by Avicennan philosophy and this percolates through his works,[24] but then Ibn ʿArabī, too, cannot evade such a charge, as Marshall G.S. Hodgson explains when he writes that Ibn ʿArabī

> willingly made use of every pattern of conceptualizing that had been known in Islamdom: not only earlier Ṣûfî mythopoetic writings, but Ashʿarî and Muʿtazilî kalâm disputation, the Bâṭinî speculations of the Ismaʿîlîs, and of course the various strands of the older philosophical heritage, including the neo-Platonist notion of creation by divine emanation. … But Ibn al-ʿArabî relied also on personal experience and taste.[25]

Ibn ʿArabī was influenced by and made use of all these "patterns of conceptualizing," but, from his scholarly output, it does not appear he *based* his metaphysics on them.[26] Hodgson, though undeniably correct that most of these

22 Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 153.

23 James Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-A, 39. This is the opposite of what ʿAfīfī argues when he says, "Some writers of his [i.e. Ibn ʿArabī's] school, such as ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, did little more than reproduce his thought in a different form." ('Afīfī, "Ibn 'Arabī," 408.)

24 Al-Qāshānī may also have been influenced by al-Qūnawī who is "better acquainted with the Avicennan tradition [than Ibn ʿArabī] and incorporates a number of its terms and concepts into his doctrine." Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 50.

25 Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:239. I would be disinclined to agree with Hodgson that Ibn ʿArabī adopted the *bāṭinī* speculations of the Ismaʿīlīs as his works do not seek to efface the literal meaning in favor of an allegorical one. Indeed, Hodgson also writes that "Ibn al-ʿArabī, however, was very sophisticated in his methods of exegesis. He accepted the rules laid down by Ghazālī limiting metaphorical exegesis of the Qurʾan and Ḥadīth reports; he was glad to acknowledge literal meanings and the authority of Arabic linguistic use. But in addition, he saw 'parallel' evocative implications in the texts, which he made the basis of a search for the *bāṭin*, inward, meanings of them." (Ibid. 2:242.) This seems to contradict his earlier assertion. See also below for details on *bāṭinī* commentaries.

26 It is widely believed that Asín Palacios, too, fell into this trap when he attributed too much influence of Christian monasticism upon Ibn ʿArabī. (See *El Islam Cristianizado*, 274, in which he comments, "Tal es, vislumbrada en la perspectiva de sus últimos influ-

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elements exist in the works of Ibn ʿArabī, maybe does not take the experiential aspect seriously enough, as he seems to relegate it to just another pattern of conceptualization rather than regarding it as the basis of all of them. There is, after all, a difference between having all these methods of conceptualizing for articulating one's mystical experiences, and using them to *create* a metaphysical outlook. Ibn ʿArabī had mystical experiences and had a plethora of ways to communicate those experiences, so naturally he would avail himself of all the methods at his disposal. This is also not to suggest that Ibn ʿArabī was not the product of a region and a time that was saturated with earlier traditions and ideas. But these traditions and ideas are not the source of the material about which he writes. It is his spiritual insight and mystical experiences which, by his own admission, are his sources (irrespective of whether one believes him or not).

Likewise al-Qāshānī was influenced by Avicennan thought but I do not believe he purposely sought to seduce philosophers by couching his language in Avicennan nomenclature, or as a means of "convincing readers with a similar falsafa or kalam training" of the legitimacy of Ibn ʿArabī's mystical worldview.[27]

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jos, la fecundidad de la espiritualidad cristiana, que investigaciones futuras pondrán tal vez a más plena luz: en el gráfico que haya de esquematizar su vital evolución, dos líneas arrancarán del monacato cristiano europea; otra marcará sin titubeos la influencia que también ejerció en la espiritualidad del Islam. Ambas líneas vendrán, por fin, a coincidir (paralelas o quizá tangentes) dentro del solar español, escenario en éste, como en otros aspectos de la cultura medieval, de las más fecundas interferencias.") Alexander Knysh writes that an objective investigation reveals this not to be the case. (Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 19:283–284.) Indeed, there seems to be a scholarly consensus now that Ibn ʿArabī, though affected by such influences, was entirely original.

27 Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7. This is not to dispute that al-Qāshānī was intimately acquainted with Avicennan philosophy, and that parts of his commentary display a marked resemblance to the theories of Avicenna, such as al-Qāshānī's treatment of the story of Mūsā and al-Khaḍir. (See al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 1:339–342; Soheil Afnan, *Avicenna: His Life and Works*, 136–167.) Al-Qāshānī also clearly followed Avicenna's idea of the theoretical and practical intellects. (Lory, *Les commentaires*, 76.) However, Ibn ʿArabī, too, was familiar with Avicenna and even made use of his terminology when it was conducive to achieving his objectives. (Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries*, 165, ft. 57.) Furthermore, al-Qāshānī's works do not simply display the influence of Avicenna. Al-Qāshānī was also very well-acquainted with and influenced by Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), see *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, 1st ed., s.v. "Illuminationism;" Nasr, "The Spread of the Illuminationist School of Suhrawardi," 775–776. Indeed, he was intimately acquainted with *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif* and tackles many of the same concepts in his works. (Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasāʾil*, 67.) In addition, there are important differences between Avicenna's cosmological outlook and that of al-Qāshānī which would have been detrimental to the Sufi's purpose of seducing Avicennan philosophers, if that

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Al-Qāshānī's works are a product of his "spiritual evolution," in the same way that Ibn ʿArabī's works are the product of his spiritual evolution, an evolution that climaxed in the acquisition of experiential insights. Nevertheless, it is also the culmination of an intellectual evolution where all the influences that were seething under the façade of both mystics' individual makeup found expression in their individual works.

Morris also alleges that al-Qāshānī is far more figurative in his commentary than Ibn ʿArabī:

> In Ibn ʿArabī … what must strike any reader is the consistent and thorough 'literality'—an attitude equally removed from Kāshānī's 'symbolic' approach and from what we ordinarily think of as 'literalism'—with which the Shaykh treats the profuse descriptions given by the Qurʾan and *hadith*.[28]

Nor is he alone in this avowal; Maḥmūd Ghurāb describes the *Taʾwīlāt* as a *bāṭinī* commentary.[29] The difference between a *bāṭinī* commentary and a Sufi commentary, says al-Dhahabī, is that the former is extreme esotericism tantamount to distortion of the Qurʾan and the latter acceptable interpretation since it does not efface or intrude on the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) of the text.[30] This is the same distinction al-Ghazālī makes when he attributes to the Ismaʿīlīs unacceptable interpretation and, in the process, defines the parameters for legitimate Qurʾanic exegesis. According to al-Ghazālī, a Sufi commentary never excludes the literal meaning of the Qurʾan.[31]

The influential Ismāʿīlī thinker, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 411/1020?), details proofs for esoteric interpretation (*taʾwīl*) in *Al-Maṣābīḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*:

> As it is impossible for wise, rational people to converse with the inanimate—those that have no life, no reward or punishment, and no means

was his intention. Fatemeh Hashtroodi, "Concept [*sic*] of Chivalry (*futuwwa*) According to Abd al-Razzaq Kashani," 33.

28 Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 9.

29 Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Raḥmah min al-Raḥmān*, 5.

30 Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr waʾl-mufassirūn*, 2:297–298. See also Kristin Zahra Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries of the Qurʾan in Classical Islam*.

31 Farouk Mitha, *Al-Ghazāli and the Ismailis*, xiii. See also Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭiniyya*, in which al-Ghazālī constructs a detailed argument against what he considers to be hermeneutic infringements of the Ismaʿīlīs that seemingly annul the obvious meaning of the Qurʾan.

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> of accepting a command or [rejecting] a prohibition, or [even] responding—it is, *a fortiori*, [impossible] for the Most High, hallowed Lord of the heavens and the Earth.
>
> However, the Messenger (upon him be peace) related from God that He addressed the heavens and the Earth, saying, *Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the Earth, 'Come willingly or unwillingly.' They said, 'We come willingly.'*[32] But *God is All-Knowing, All-Wise*,[33] and the heavens and the Earth are inanimate, without rationality or means of speech. Thus, due to the impossibility of a wise person addressing the inanimate, there must be, in His command to the heavens and the Earth and their response to Him, a meaning that makes the statement of God, the Exalted, true and acceptable to the intellect in its wisdom, and it is this meaning that we call esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Therefore, esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) is necessary.[34]

In this passage, al-Kirmānī argues for the necessity of engaging in esoteric interpretation as there are instances when the literal interpretation is "not acceptable to the intellect." But in so doing, he denies the literal text and seeks to supplant it with his interpretation. He does not endeavor to explain the text, in contravention of al-Ghazālī's instructions.[35]

Al-Qāshānī's language is often metaphorical and sometimes even allegorical, such as in the commentary of chapter 12, which is turned "into a full-fledged Philo-like allegory about the struggle between man's inner faculties such as his heart (*al-qalb al-mustaʿidd*—Joseph) and his intellect (*al ʿaql*—Jacob), his outer and inner senses (*al-ḥawāss al-ẓāhira wa-l-bāṭina*—the brothers), and his carnal soul which incites to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi-l-sūʾ*—his master's wife, *imraʾat al-ʿaziz*);"[36] he only engages in this "following Ibn al-ʿArabi's *Futūḥāt*."[37] The metaphors and allegories al-Qāshānī conjures, then, are

32 Qur'an, 41:11.

33 Ibid., 76:30.

34 Al-Kirmānī, *Al-Maṣābīḥ*, 53–54.

35 I must concede that the naked contempt for the apparent meaning of the Qur'an here displayed is a little reductionistic as al-Kirmānī and other Fatimid thinkers did attempt to conciliate, at least to some degree, the hidden (*bāṭin*) and manifest (*ẓāhir*) aspects of the Qur'an, combining in the process orthopraxy with esoteric interpretation. Nevertheless, it does show that esoteric interpretation has pride of place for al-Kirmānī, something that is alien to al-Qāshānī, who exhausts all exoteric facets of interpretation before he proceeds to the esoteric. See below for further details.

36 Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Are There Allegories in Ṣūfī Qur'ān Interpretation?," 369.

37 Ibid.

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mere extensions of and explanations for what is already present in the works of Ibn ʿArabī. Here again does he assume the mantle of commentator. Al-Dhahabī, also of this opinion, writes that in exegesis, al-Qāshānī merely follows where Ibn ʿArabī leads.[38]

Indeed, al-Dhahabī, after delineating the difference between a *bāṭinī* commentary and a mystical one, concludes that al-Qāshānī's is predominantly mystical. Opinions that the *Taʾwīlāt* is *baṭinī*, says al-Dhahabī, are influenced by and predicated on a fixation with passages pertaining to oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) in which the allusions are far-fetched (*al-ishāra al-baʿīda*). Al-Qāshānī does not efface the manifest meaning (*ẓahir*) of the text,[39] and his *sharīʿa*-compliant life is an entailment of his submission to literal Qurʾanic injunctions. This sorts ill with the assertion that he was *Bāṭinī*, he who denies the exoteric meaning of the Qurʾan and says "the meaning is the esoteric one alone."[40]

Al-Qāshānī never rejects the literal word of the Qurʾan, a fact to which his all-encompassing commentary, *Haqāʾiq al-taʾwīl*, bears ample and repeated testimony. In this work the exoteric and esoteric co-exist. Indeed, in the introduction of this commentary al-Qāshānī comments that his teacher, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Kīshī (d. 695/1296?), said:

> The account of whoever pens an exegesis [of the Qurʾan should] contain five things … the first is an explication of the language, the second is the different types of desinential inflections (*iʿrāb*), the third is the points of rhetoric (*maʿānī waʾl-bayān*), the fourth is the exoteric exegesis (*ẓawāhir al-tafsīr*) and the fifth is the realities of esoteric exegesis (*ḥaqāʾiq al-taʾwīl*), and that which refers to the state (*ḥāl*) of the interpreter in terms of the inner rank of what is revealed, and to explain what is apparent to him. None of the exegetes have trodden this path [of esoteric exegesis], so

38 Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr waʾl-mufassirūn*, 2:300, 307. Lory is also of this opinion. See Lory, *Les commentaires*, 28.

39 Helmut Gätje writes that al-Qāshānī creates a "parallel exegesis" in which are "allusions" (*ishārāt*) to a deeper esoteric knowledge, but that he also maintains "the character of reality of the external meaning." Gätje, *The Qurʾan and its Exegesis*, 40.

40 Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr waʾl-mufassirūn*, 2:296–298. This is an exegetical principle developed by Philo, namely, that "the Bible had a literal as well as an allegorical sense." (Yeshayahu Goldfeld, "The Development of Theory on Qurʾānic Exegesis," 11.) In the Islamic context, the binary fission of exegesis into exoteric and esoteric is seen as early as ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), and the principles of interpretation he outlines. (Ibid., 15–16.) However, it must be noted that most specialists in Qurʾanic commentary are skeptical of attributions to Ibn ʿAbbās. (See Andrew Rippin, ed., *The Qurʾan: Formative Interpretation*, xii.)

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> blessed be he who purifies his intention [and does this] for God, and precedes all others in this virtue. So it occurred to me that I was who he [al-Kīshī] meant by his insinuation, even though I was not worthy of that.[41]

Al-Qāshānī, accordingly, divides his commentary into the following categories:

1. Linguistic analysis (*lugha*)
2. Desinential inflections (*iʿrāb*)
3. Rhetoric (*maʿānī wa'l-bayān*)[42]
4. Exoteric exegesis (*tafsīr*)
5. Esoteric exegesis (*taʾwīl*)

Conspicuously, all the exoteric sciences *precede* the esoteric one. There is no question, therefore, of al-Qāshānī negating the apparent meaning. This evidence is all the more compelling as the *taʾwīl* section contains the same commentary that appears unaccompanied in the *Taʾwīlāt*.

The oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) sections of the *Taʾwīlāt* are *bāṭinī*, complains al-Dhahabī. But his issue seems to be less with the commentary and more with the actual concept itself, for he levels the same charge against Ibn ʿArabī remarking that oneness of being

> as far as I can see is totally detrimental to the exegesis [of the Qurʾan]. And He [Ibn ʿArabī] changes what God means by His verses and compels them to include his thought so that they may be a support for him. This is not the purpose of an exegete.[43]

Notwithstanding what he views as an aberrational notion, he classifies Ibn ʿArabī's hermeneutic approach as "commentary by allusion" (*al-tafsīr al-ishārī*),[44] by which he means that the mystic alleges the hidden meaning of each verse of the Qurʾan is alluded to by the literal word of the text. If it is not made explicit, it is only to preserve it from the parochial apprehension and egregious misapprehension of exoteric scholars and mystical dilettantes.

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41 This citation is translated from the version edited by Necmettin Ergül as part of his doctoral thesis. Ergül, "Kāşānī ve Hakāiku't-te'vīl fī dekāik't-tenzīl Adli Eserinin," 2.

42 Both these terms, along with *badīʿ*, are sub-sections of rhetoric and represent "translations of essential terms of Greek rhetoric." (Benjamin Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law: Harun-al-Rashid's Codification Project*, 422–425, 422.) See also G.J.H. Van Gelder, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem*, 8–11.

43 Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, 2:304–305.

44 Ibid., 2:304. This is also how Sands defines it. See *Sufi Commentaries*, 39–42.

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The only people, claims Ibn ʿArabī, worthy of explaining God's book are the Sufis as they derive their knowledge from God, and they comment on the Qurʾan using spiritual insight (*baṣīra*) whereas exotericists (*ahl al-ẓāhir*) use opinions and guesswork.[45] As such, Ibn ʿArabī does not distinguish between the Qurʾan itself and the interpretation of the people of God[46] since both are right because, just as the Qurʾan is from God and apodictically true, so too is the interpretation of the people of God as it is directly from God to their hearts.[47]

Al-Qāshānī's commentary is predicated on an externalization of this belief. But not for him is the loose designation of spiritual unveiling. Instead, he favors an exact allocation of mystical ranks, and his entire work outlines stages of spirituality for those on the path because the stage affects, indeed determines, comprehension of Qurʾanic verses,[48] as he explains in his introduction of the *Taʾwīlāt*:

> As for the esoteric interpretation (*taʾwīl*) … it differs according to the state of the listener and his station in the ranks of his wayfaring, and [according to] the differences of his status, every time he graduates from his station, a new gate of understanding is opened for him and he beholds through it a pre-prepared, subtle meaning.[49]

45 Ibn ʿArabī replaces probability with certainty due to the authority of spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) because theology cannot be at the mercy of intellectual whims, as Van Ess observes when he says that using reason for theological problems was a "position [that] turned out to be untenable. Eternal truths could not be subject to the caprices of the human intellect. … In the *fiqh*, the human attempt to understand divine law, it was a different situation. It was soon recognized that the judgement of a mufti or a *qāḍī* never led to more than a certain probability (*ghalabat al-ẓann*)." (Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 175.) Rufus Jones, along similar lines, says, "No religion can minister to the deepest needs of men unless it reveals permanent and time-transcending Realities." (Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xiii.)

46 Scholem makes this very observation about mystics in general. He writes: "Mysticism postulates self-knowledge, to use a Platonic term, as the surest way to God who reveals Himself in the depths of the self." (Scholem, *Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 34.)

47 Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr waʾl-mufassirūn*, 2:304. The difference between this opinion and that of Avicenna, according to al-Dhahabī, is that while Ibn ʿArabī believed exotericists did not possess the *spiritual insight* to comprehend the hidden meaning of the Qurʾan, Avicenna claimed people did not possess the *intelligence* to do so. He thus explained the realities of religion through philosophical opinions because he believed the Qurʾan was a compilation of allusions through which God hinted to realities that laymen would be unable to understand, so he intimated them for those who could. (Ibid., 2:314.)

48 Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, 76–77. Al-Qāshānī calls this methodology "making correspondences" (*taṭbīq*) as Sands correctly observes. (Ibid., 77.)

49 Al-Qāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 6.

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But what some see as "allegorical reductionism,"[50] which is antithetical to Ibn ʿArabī's highly subtle and complex thought, may also be regarded as yet another example of al-Qāshānī's pedagogical slant due to his stated difference in audience. This is also the reason, as previously mentioned, that he is so hesitant about probing all the connotations of Ibn ʿArabī's terms. And from the very outset are the consequences of this approach discernible, for when Ibn ʿArabī defines *huwiyya* as "The Reality in the realm of the unseen (ʿālam *al-ghayb*),"[51] he leaves the canvas blank for all shades and strokes of the comprehension of God. Only in the chapter of Shuʿayb of the *Fuṣūṣ* are we given a slight intimation as to what this involves: God in His absolute incomprehensibility. This, nonetheless, is only the starting point of a range that concludes with the materialization of the sensible world, absorbing all existents and manifestations in the intervening planes.

Al-Qāshānī, on the other hand, provides numerous comprehensive definitions of *huwiyya* in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt* and *Laṭāʾif*. While in agreement with his forerunner's denotations of *huwiyya*, he largely limits his usage to the unknown God. This scholarly reticence could be because the lexicon/*tafsīr* format curbs his exploration of the term or because he is unable to adequately assimilate and articulate this meaning in his style. Either way, it is not wilful deviation from his master, but an outcome of circumstance. Even when entirely original uses of the term—the "unknown-ness" of *huwiyya*, for instance—are employed, one still perceives no direct conflict with Ibn ʿArabī; indeed, these connotations could quite easily be categorized as offshoots and examinations of existing formulae in the Andalusian's semantic framework. Much as this imparts a distinct hue to al-Qāshānī's exposition of the term, not least because of its emphasis on the creational aspect of the term as opposed to its theocentric one in that of Ibn ʿArabī's, it never collides with the original. It feels completely like a conciliatory commentary, because that is precisely what it is.

Al-Qāshanī is thus tributary to Ibn ʿArabī,[52] a gnostic one who recognizes that his rank does not permit him to question or challenge his master, it simply allows him to accept and explain the former's deep theological meditations so

50 Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, 77.

51 Ibn ʿArabī, *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 538.

52 Al-Qāshānī only began studying the *Fuṣūṣ* in particular, and gained a mastery of Ibn ʿArabī's works generally, after his principal teacher, Nūr al-Dīn al-Naṭanzī, passed away and he perceived a great void that needed to be filled. He remarks that during this time, "I entered the desert and I remained there for seven months. I chose solitude there with little food." After this period, with no living teacher, al-Qāshānī turned to Ibn ʿArabī due to Naṭanzī's reverence for him and because he had kissed the *Fuṣūṣ* out of respect. (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif*, 9.) Therefore, in one sense, Ibn ʿArabī was al-Qāshānī's direct *shaykh* after Naṭanzī.

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that the teachings he subscribes to so assiduously reach a wider audience. This potential broader accessibility, one of al-Qāshānī's stated goals,[53] comes at the price of a profundity that defies articulation—something Ibn ʿArabī himself makes clear when he claims his work should not be read by the masses.[54] Al-Qāshānī, in this sense, seems to oppose his master by increasing his appeal. But Ibn ʿArabī's prohibition, one notes, is more a defense against his detractors, who levelled charges of heresy against him, than an outright ban. Indeed, his objective in composing the *Fuṣūṣ*—arguably his most divisive work—was that people would know it and derive benefit from it.[55] Al-Qāshānī understands this and launches his own defense of the Andalusian Sufi by flattening and sanitizing his work—another potential reason why he refuses to probe all facets of Ibn ʿArabī's semantics.

The main difference between the two, however, is not in the minutiae and nuances of textual discrepancies, but in the overall comprehension and execution of one's perceived role, for Ibn ʿArabī's function is very much "'intellectualization' of Sufism—without loss of the 'experiential.'"[56] Al-Qāshānī never contests this mantle; his objective, as he himself has stated in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *Rashḥ* and *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ*,[57] is to make sense of this "intellectualization" through an analysis of terms for Sufi novices. In this way, his works are more term-centric to be sure, but with the overall purpose of normalizing and regularizing Ibn ʿArabī's thought. So it is that if Ibn ʿArabī's "watershed achievement" is the "intellectualization" of Sufism,[58] al-Qāshānī's is the universalization of Sufism.[59]

Of chief concern is how he achieves this, for al-Qāshānī knew that in bringing Ibn ʿArabī's work to a larger audience, he would inevitably make the Andalusian's works more accessible to potential detractors. His pre-emptive response to this appears to be to adopt a "scholastic" style which would (a) placate potential critics by the normalcy of its format, and (b) dispel the myth of a disorganized farrago of mystic ideas by seemingly creating a step-by-step manual

53 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ*, 3. He expresses similar aspirations in his lexicons. See Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 21; Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl*, 34.

54 See introduction.

55 Ibn ʿArabī states in his introduction of the *Fuṣūṣ* that it was given to him by Muḥammad in a dream. Handing him the entire *Fuṣūṣ*, the Prophet said, "This is the book of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, take it, and go with it to people so they may benefit from it." (Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 47.)

56 Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 128.

57 See above.

58 Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 128.

59 The universalization of Sufism seems to be his main objective in the *Laṭāʾif*, which is why it has a much greater scope and transcends Ibn ʿArabī. See introduction for more details.

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akin to those of exoteric sciences. This he achieves through the combination of his lexicons and the *Taʾwīlāt*. In essence, he looks to have conscripted the 'scholastic' process for his aims because scholasticism, as George Makdisi notes, was

> a scholarly religious movement, away from the excesses of a philosophical theology inspired by Greek thought, towards a juridical theology more in conformity with the nomocracy of Islam.[60]

Al-Qāshānī uses the tools of this movement to normalize philosophical theology[61] so that it appears more like juridical theology. This he accomplishes by his staunch adherence to terms and maintaining their prescribed limits. Whereas in the works of Ibn ʿArabī "the same idea is indicated with different names,"[62] thereby perplexing the reader and perpetuating the notion of a chaotic, woolly system, al-Qāshānī remains resolute and consistent in the use of his terms even if it costs him some of the meanings on the periphery of the Andalusian's scale. Nor could it be otherwise, for Ibn ʿArabī's terms have sundry meanings that have a basic core but which fade into one another as they move away from the semantic center. Al-Qāshānī cedes the hazy perimeter to preserve the integrity of the nucleus. What he gains in structure, he loses in vibrancy, but that is a sacrifice he seems willing to make.

Nor is this penchant confined to terms, as Ibn ʿArabī's exegesis follows a similar pattern. He cares little about consistency and uniformity, as Abū Zayd notes:

> One verse may evoke in the intellect of Ibn ʿArabī many existential and gnostic proofs in a specific context. It is also possible that the same verse evokes different proofs in another context. The thing that pervades the works of Ibn ʿArabī, especially those that are connected to the exegesis of the Qurʾanic text, is the numerous problems which make their comprehension difficult [and is only intelligible] after much deliberation. [The difficulty arises from] the relationship between the scattered ideas and the endeavor to combine them in one sequence.[63]

60 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, xx.

61 Makdisi uses this term to denote theology influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, as is apparent from the context. But al-Qāshānī uses it for his own purposes, that is, to normalize Ibn ʿArabī's philosophical theology. (See introduction for details on the classification of Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysical outlook.)

62 De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 171.

63 Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl*, 257.

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Al-Qāshānī, on the other hand, makes his work far more comprehensible as the ideas are organized and the terms used to describe them consistent. Morris argues that it is Ibn ʿArabī who is literal and constant and al-Qāshānī who is not. The reason, I believe, Morris launches this scathing attack (for he intends it as such) on al-Qāshānī is that we find in the *Taʾwīlāt* none of the hair-splitting grammatical analysis with which the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* are punctuated, and were one to study the *Taʾwīlāt* alone it would appear that al-Qāshānī is quite blasé about this. But when analyzed through the *Ḥaqāʾiq*, in which entire sections are devoted to grammar, the cause for this omission becomes evident. Moreover, there is uniformity in the "symbolic"[64] approach of al-Qāshānī that Ibn ʿArabī does not share and for which he does not much care. The images conjured by the former are consistently repeated and far more defined and narrower than the expansive, indeterminate ones of Ibn ʿArabī, as the previous section has adequately shown. This, again, is due to al-Qāshānī's unerring pedagogical concern, which he prizes above all else.[65]

The disciple's didactic approach seems to manifest itself in other ways, too, such as the format of "self-study" books that al-Qāshānī's lexicons and even the *Taʾwīlāt* appear to assume, for as Makdisi remarks,

> Traditionalism was the only scholastic movement in Islam, contrary to what has long been identified as such, namely Kalam, the movement of philosophical theology. Strictly speaking, Kalam was not scholastic; it was, in fact, *excluded* from the schools. As a philosophical theology it was banned from the school curricula, especially so from the colleges of law: the *masjid*-inn and the madrasa.[66]

64 Morris, *"Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters,"* part II-B, 9.

65 It is worthy of mention that a marked pedagogical edge is perceptible throughout the entire corpus of al-Qāshānī's *oeuvre*. This is most prominent in works such as *Tuḥfat al-ikwān fī khaṣāʾiṣ al-fityān*, which aims to delineate qualities and traits that neophytes need to inculcate within themselves in order to proceed on the path to enlightenment. (See al-Qāshānī, *Ādāb al-ṭarīqa wa asrār al-ḥaqīqa*, 9–47.) Other examples include al-Qāshānī's numerous *rasāʾil*, which seek to educate his audience on specific topics and are written in response to questions directed at the Sufi from his followers. The treatise, *Fī ittiḥād al-dhāt maʿ al-ṣifāt aw taghāyurihā*, is a good case in point. (Ibid., 141.) Another work that displays this propensity is al-Qāshānī's commentary on *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*. (Al-Qashānī, *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn li Abū Ismāʿīl ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, sharḥ Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī*.)

66 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 2.

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The colleges of law and *madrasas*, therefore, excluded this type of study. Nevertheless, in al-Qāshānī's era, under the patronage of the powerful vizier Rashīd al-Dīn and then his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the study of Sufism in spiritual retreats (*khānqas*) flourished.[67] It should be borne in mind, however, that this type of study was still side-lined, as attested by a late fourteenth century manual on the craft of secretaries, which provides "the ordering of ranks."[68] The first six of the "elite of civil society (*ashrāf al-nās*)," in order, were: "the law professors, the jurisconsults, the Koran commentators, the Traditionists, the preachers, the deliverers of the Friday sermons (*khaṭībs*)," while the "Sufi Shaykhs (*arbāb-e futuvvat*) and hermits … in the Sufi covenants and *ribāṭs*" were in sixteenth and seventeenth place respectively.[69] Moreover, Ibn ʿArabī's thought was still challenged, not only by traditionalist stalwarts like Ibn Taymiyya, but also Sufis like the influential mystic al-Simnāni.[70] So the need to author "guidebooks" arose, as Makdisi declares:

> The exclusion of many sciences from the curricula of institutionalized learning created a demand for "guidebooks", in addition to the commentaries, to guide autodidacts in their studies. It was one thing to own books, quite another to read and understand them. This need for guidance brought about the production of books which, although they could be used by students studying under the direction of teachers, were written primarily with the autodidact in mind … books on technical terms, distinct from the ordinary lexicons … commentaries on fundamental works as substitutes for the teacher. … They were, as previously remarked, veritable maps laying out the unfamiliar territory of newly approached fields, with clear lines of demarcation, across which territory the neophyte was taken by the hand, as it were, and led gently from one field to the next. Such books as these served primarily both the humanist and the student of the "foreign sciences." Some authors state the purpose of their books explicitly, others do not.[71]

67 Said Arjomand, "Philanthropy, the Law, and Public Policy in the Islamic World before the Modern Era," 124; Charles Melville, "The Mongols in Iran," 59; Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, 60.

68 Arjomand, "Philanthropy," 124.

69 Ibid., 124–125.

70 Al-Qāshānī's letter to al-Simnānī is particularly instructive in this regard. (See above.) On the correspondence between these two mystics see also Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 199–200.

71 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 218.

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So admirably does Makdisi's account of such works reflect al-Qāshānī's own characterization of his lexicons[72] that it could almost be written exclusively about them. Al-Qāshānī, one could say, seems to take the Sufi autodidacts "by the hand" with the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, which serves as a user-friendly introduction to Ibn ʿArabī's terms and is intended to be consulted alongside the *Taʾwīlāt, Manāzil* and *Sharḥ fuṣūs*, until they graduate to *Rashḥ*, which is deeper and more complex, both in content and structure.

It is worth mentioning that Ibn ʿArabī was a relative newcomer on the Sufi scene in al-Qāshānī's region. We know that the *Fuṣūṣ* only became easily available in Shiraz around 655/1257.[73] At this time, the mystical landscape was dominated by al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ*, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Naẓm al-sulūk* and al-Suhrawardī's *ʿAwārif*.[74] So students with an interest in mysticism would likely not have known much about Ibn ʿArabī, to say nothing of his arcane terms and erudite metaphysics. A proponent of the nascent school of Ibn ʿArabī would understandably have placed great emphasis on propagation of his master's teachings, and it is a testament to al-Qāshānī's industry and success that towards the end of his life, the *Fuṣūṣ* had been inducted into this pantheon.[75]

Al-Qāshānī was by no means alone in penning such works, for as Makdisi remarks,

> A striking feature of Muslim education in the Middle Ages was the dichotomy between two sets of sciences: the "religious" and the "foreign." This dichotomy would not be so remarkable were it not for the fact that actual intellectual activity embraced the two sets, and scholarly production was prosperous in both.[76]

Al-Qāshānī seems to have intended the Sufi neophytes to progress from the exoteric sciences to the esoteric ones, imitating his own scholarly and spiritual trajectory in doing so. We see allusions to this in the *Ḥaqāʾiq*, where all basic sci-

72 See introduction, where al-Qāshānī is cited as having said that his purpose for writing the *Iṣṭilaḥāt* is to supplement the *Taʾwīlāt, Manāzil* and *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ* because people did not understand the Sufi terminology featured in them. He also declares that he wrote *Rashḥ* because there was a need among Sufi neophytes (one of whom requests the work to be written) to elaborate on the *Iṣṭilaḥāt*.

73 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasāʾil*, 68–69.

74 Ibid., 67–69.

75 Ibid., 69–70.

76 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 77.

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ences of language and grammar are dealt with first, followed by rhetoric, then exoteric exegesis and, finally, esoteric exegesis.[77] This was indeed the normal course advocated by many mystics who saw mysticism as an advanced level of learning as well as of spirituality.[78] It was also, of course, a means of legitimizing their brand of mysticism, for many of those who claimed privileged esoteric knowledge without having mastered the literal sciences were shunned and their school repudiated, as Makdisi notes,

> Ibn al-Jauzi censured the Sufi Hammad ad-Dabbas (d. 525/1131) whose Sufism he considered suspect because "he was destitute of the Islamic sciences." … The tendency in Islam was to encourage a diversification of the sciences to be learned. A learned man should have some knowledge of every science.[79]

It did not behove the defender of a school to invite suspicion due to his ignorance, or his actions, which may have been why al-Qāshānī was just as fastidious in his observance of Islamic laws as his predecessor.[80] Nor was al-Qāshānī's *sharīʿa*-compliance outside the norm, as

> Medieval men, humanists and scholastics alike, were not merely men of contemplation; they were on the whole practical men of action, men who preached that one must practise what he preaches.[81]

Every facet of al-Qāshānī's life and conduct had to be unimpeachable because "orthodoxy" was defined "in legal terms,"[82] and therefore in order to demonstrate the essential orthodoxy of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, all aspects of al-Qāshānī's behavior would have had to pass this litmus test. Indeed, al-Qāshānī in his letter to al-Simnānī, despite his usual reticence about detailing aspects of his life,

77 See above.

78 See Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 80–91. See especially the sequence of disciplines mastered by al-Qushayrī (82).

79 Ibid., 84.

80 One recalls Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's (d. 709/1310) famous debate with Ibn ʿArabī's chief critic, Ibn Taymiyya, in which the mystic petitioned the jurist to reconcile Ibn ʿArabī's unwavering orthopraxy with the charges of incarnationism he levelled against him; Ibn Taymiyya had no response to this. It must be remarked, nevertheless, that the textual origins of this encounter are somewhat problematic. (See Julian Johansen, *Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt*, 108.)

81 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 339.

82 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 284.

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cites his orthopraxy as a demonstration of the compatibility between orthodoxy and belief in oneness of being.[83]

So it was that orthodoxy had to beam out of every prayer al-Qāshānī read, out of every speech he delivered, and every page he wrote. The fundamental character of theology was apologetic in nature anyway, but it was the defense of Islam against other religions.[84] Al-Qāshānī appears to have turned this inter-religious discipline into an intra-religious one by using the tools of apologetics to defend Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics against co-religionists, such as Ibn Taymiyya, who posed a formidable challenge to Ibn ʿArabī's supporters. In the second of his famous three *fatwās* against the Mongols, distinguished by its polemical nature, the jurist singles out Ibn ʿArabī's followers as among those against whom it is permissible to take up arms, classifying them as people of innovation (*ahl al-bidʿa*).[85] The rise in popularity of the Sufi was viewed by Ibn Tayimiyya as yet another symptom of Shiʿism creeping into the upper echelons of the Mongol ruling class, and could thus have not been issued before Öljeytü's conversion in late 708/1308, or early 709/1309.[86]

Rashīd al-Dīn, known to be in contact with Ibn Taymiyya,[87] could not have taken kindly to this legal pronouncement, and it is very likely that his patronage of 51 Sufis, including al-Qāshānī, was a reaction to the threat Ibn Taymiyya posed.[88] His patronage was extended by his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who was even more ardent in his encouragement of Sufi literature; indeed, al-Qāshānī dedicates many of his works to him.[89] In fact, such was the closeness between the two that animadversions were made about it, as is clear in the letters between al-Qāshānī and al-Simnānī.[90]

Al-Qāshānī, therefore, had to defend Ibn ʿArabī's thought, not only against exotericists like Ibn Taymiyya, but also against influential mystics like al-

83 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasāʾil*, 157.

84 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 284; Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 158.

85 Denise Aigle, "The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah's Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwas," 100–101.

86 Ibid., 118.

87 Ibid., 105–106.

88 Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem'," 54. It must also be remembered that Sufis were immensely influential at the Mongol court anyway, especially those of the Kubrawī order, of which Simnānī was a proponent, as it is they who converted the rulers to Islam in the first place. See Haji Muhammad Bukhari Lubis, "The Role of Sufis in Converting the Mongols to Islam;" Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 55.

89 Al-Qāshānī would meet regularly with Rashīd al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn. (Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem'," 57.)

90 Ibid., 56.

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Simnānī.[91] His letters to the latter show that he constructs the edifice of his defense upon the three pillars of Qur'anic verses, prophetic narrations and orthopraxy.[92] Perhaps buoyed by the success he had with al-Simnānī, who took a more favorable opinion of Ibn ʿArabī due to this correspondence and even actively defended him,[93] al-Qāshānī seems to have adopted the same formula in his works on the Andalusian.[94] Furthermore, due to the popularity of the public debate (*munāẓara*) format, which was responsible for Öljeytü's conversion to Shiʿism and continued to play a pivotal role at the Mongol court,[95] with accompanying rewards,[96] al-Qāshānī, it would appear, embraced the art of public disputation which was intimately intertwined with apologetics, as Van Ess describes:

> Theology, because of its apologetic nature, favored public debate from the start, and that attracted curiosity-seekers and produced emotional reactions. As in the marketplace, skill and speed of reaction often prevailed over circumspection and sincerity.[97]

Perhaps the distance-learning students of al-Qāshānī whom he was training, not only to progress along the spiritual path, but also to defend the metaphys-

91 Al-Simnānī was close to Öljeytü, but after his conversion to Shiʿism, shunned him; he, nevertheless, still had an intimate association with his son, Abū Saʿīd, and was the most influential Sufi throughout the empire during his reign. (Devin Deweese, "'Alāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī's Religious Encounters at the Mongol Court Near Tabriz," 36–37; Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 161.)

92 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasāʾil*, 157.

93 Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 97–98. Indeed, al-Qāshānī and al-Simnānī even met face-to-face after their correspondence. (Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 62.)

94 The letters to al-Simnānī were written sometime after 720/1320? (Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasāʾil*, 156) and the *Ḥaqāʾiq* and *Taʾwīlāt* were written between 727/1327? and 729/1329?, after which were written *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ, Iṣṭilāḥāt, Rashḥ* and *Laṭāʾif*. (Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem'," 79, 85.)

95 Turner, *Islam Without Allah?*, 51; Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*, 172. Öljeytü even had a "mobile madrasa" that accompanied him and in which debates took place between the leading proponents of Shiʿism and different Sunni schools. (Sheila Blair, "The Religious Art of the Ilkhanids," 117.)

96 Chief among these was the propagation of one's school with the royal seal of approval. For it is known that although Öljeytü was religiously tolerant, he still ordered removal of the names of the first four Sunni Caliphs from coins and replaced them with names of the Twelve Imams. Also, the latter were to be mentioned at Friday prayers by royal decree. See *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, 2006 ed., 573, s.v. "Öljeitü."

97 Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 185.

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ics of the school, needed to be well-versed in the specialty of disputation in Mongol-era Iran. Now this art was one of the main ways of learning about theology as well, as Richard Frank explains:

> *Kalām* … called itself: *'ilm uṣūl ad-dīn*. As with the *disputatio* of medieval Scholasticism, the *munāẓarā* was one of the chief techniques of learning and research for the *kalām* (as for the *figh* too); and it is this, again as in the case of Scholasticism, that gave it its characteristic form of expression.[98]

But al-Qāshānī, it seems, was less interested in his students learning via disputation and more in their possessing the "skill and speed of reaction" required to triumph. This being the case, his works needed to be easy to learn; comprehensible, even to those not well-acquainted with Ibn 'Arabī's thought; and concise enough to deal a devastating blow in a public disputation.

The first of these, memorization, was "pervasive in all fields."[99] However, though "memorization involved great quantities of materials, their understanding, and their retention through frequent repetition at close intervals of time,"[100] a multi-volume work like the *Futūḥāt* would overwhelm even the most assiduous student. Works had to be reasonable in length, as the lexicons of al-Qāshānī[101] and the *Ta'wīlāt* are, with texts that could be recalled in battle promptly, as Makdisi explains:

> The "Art of the humanist secretary" was as impregnated with it as was the "Art of the scholastic disputant;" that is to say that both humanism and scholasticism were based on the ability of memorizing great stores of materials, so classified, ordered and disposed in the memory as to enable their adepts, in the moment of need, to retrieve them instantly.[102]

Al-Qāshānī, in his introduction to the *Ta'wīlāt*, may be insinuating that, among other things, he intends his work to be learned and retrieved in such a scenario. He writes,

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98 Richard Frank, "*Kalām* and Philosophy: A Perspective from One Problem," 71.

99 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 207.

100 Ibid., 202.

101 The *Laṭā'if* could also be used for this purpose as, even though it is intended for exotericists, it displays the essential orthodoxy of Sufism by showing its origins in Qur'an and Ḥadīth. As such, it would be invaluable in a disputation where verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet could be invoked to legitimize a particular position or belief.

102 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 207.

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> I began to draft on these pages that which may allow (*yasmaḥ*) the mind (*al-khāṭir*) to [proceed to] the path of agreement (*sabīl al-ittifāq*), without roaming thirstily for the rest of the commentary, nor plunging into the abyss of the look-out points which are too vast to be determined, while respecting the organization and arrangement of the book. [I have also] not returned to that which is repeated in it or that which is similar in approach. And I have essentially not mentioned everything that, in my opinion, does not accept, or does not need a *ta'wīl*.[103]

His purpose in authoring the *Ta'wīlāt*, remarks al-Qāshānī, is that it would allow people to reach "the path of agreement (*sabīl al-ittifāq*)" without the need to roam "thirstily for the rest of the commentary," perhaps because the sample given during the disputation would be enough.[104] The propitiative motive for this work is emblematic of al-Qāshānī's personality generally, which was so conciliatory that he did not even retaliate when al-Simnānī hastily proclaimed him to be an apostate for believing in oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) before confessing he had not researched the concept in much detail.[105] Indeed, he was known to be the epitome of gentle grace, and was polite to a fault, even to his most inveterate opponents.[106]

Al-Qāshānī makes the work concise intentionally, without "plunging into the abyss of the look-out points which are too vast to be determined," possibly so that it would be easy to memorize and understand. Length not being the only determining factor in such works, the *Fuṣūṣ*, though shorter than the *Ta'wīlāt*, would—one imagines—have been far less effective in a disputation than the works of al-Qāshānī. This is because it is convoluted and extremely erudite so that even if the student understood it, the opponent may not, and even if he did, it is not succinct enough to defeat the adversary in a limited time.

This brings us to the second factor: comprehensibility, for if there is one aspect of al-Qāshānī's work that almost everyone seems to agree on, it is that it is simpler and much more intelligible than that of his master.[107] The primary reason for this is naturally to facilitate the comprehension of students, for

103 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 6.

104 In this case, al-Qāshānī would be harboring hopes of enticing the uninitiated into the school of Ibn ʿArabī by what they would learn during disputations because it was one of the "chief techniques of learning and research," as Frank proclaims. (See above.)

105 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt-i-rasāʾil*, 156.

106 Ibid., 99.

107 Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 5.

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"memorization, not meant to be unreasoning rote learning, was reinforced with intelligence and understanding,"[108] and al-Qāshānī fostered this understanding through his numerous lexicons and uncomplicated style. But it may also be because the comprehension of the rival is required as a decisive victory cannot be claimed unless and until the competitor understands they have lost. This could be why al-Qāshānī does not include in the *Ta'wīlāt* everything he knows; rather, he restricts himself to what the student, or perhaps the disputant, needs. In his words,

> I do not claim that I have reached the limit [of meanings] in what I mentioned. Nay, for the facets of comprehension are not restricted to what I have understood, and the knowledge of God is not confined to what I know. Nevertheless, my understanding is not restricted to what I have mentioned in it.[109]

Al-Qāshānī comments that, not only is there much more to the mystical exegesis of the Qur'an than he knows, but that he has not even included everything he knows for the sake of brevity and concision.[110] Another reason al-Qāshānī may have omitted so much, as we have noted, is because he only included what was required by his audience, the neophytes and uninitiated. He concedes that, in trying to weed out repetition, he may have favored some verses over others, but maintains that he has kept clear of far-fetched interpretations, as this would be antithetical to the ethos of the school. Or as he puts it,

> And that which could not be esoterically interpreted of the exoteric ordinances, intended to be exoteric, I did not interpret esoterically except a little so that it may be known that they may be understood thus and [the meaning of] analogous verses could be thus inferred for one who goes beyond the exoteric. There is no escape from arbitrariness, and the mark of virtue is forsaking far-fetched [esoteric meanings].[111]

Here he intimates that in his work there are lessons on esoteric interpretation for those who attain a sufficient spiritual understanding so that they may conduct such an exegesis themselves. He continues in the same vein:

108 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 103.
109 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 6.
110 Lory, *Les commentaires*, 27.
111 Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 6.

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> Perhaps someone other than me following guidance will be directed to better aspects [of interpretation], for that is easy for those who are individual servants [of God]. And for each word of God, the Exalted, are [so many words] that seas would run dry before they are exhausted. So how can they be restricted and enumerated? But [this] is a sample (*anmūdhaj*) for the people of spiritual tasting (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wijdān*) which they may imitate when they recite the Qur'an so that its hidden knowledge may be unveiled for them in accordance with their preparedness, and its secrets of the unseen may be revealed to them in accordance with their capacity.[112]

Al-Qāshānī announces that the *Ta'wīlāt* is "a sample (*anmūdhaj*) for the people of spiritual tasting (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wijdān*)." In other words, it is a sample for spiritual neophytes, one they can use as a point of departure for their own gnosis, and it is a sample for them through which they could potentially debate with the uninitiated and defend the school. Both of al-Qāshānī's aims are here declared: to teach mystical novices about Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics and to enable them to carry out a defense of his teachings.

Al-Qāshānī was simultaneously a propagator of Ibn ʿArabī's thought and a bulwark against the relentless vituperation that descended upon it, not just from exotericists, like Ibn Taymiyya, but from the powerful and politically connected Kubrawī order,[113] of which the mighty al-Simnānī was a prominent proponent, as well as the Ṣafawī order.[114] The disciple of Ibn ʿArabī seems to have fashioned himself as an anti-Simnānī alternative. Al-Simnānī, who saw the incipient threat of Ibn ʿArabī's monism as compromising divine transcendence, waged all out war against the doctrine of oneness of being. His idea of "varying degrees of divine self-manifestation … through intermediaries"[115] is pitted squarely against the Andalusian's monist thought. Al-Qāshānī seems to have taken al-Simnānī's most influential work, his commentary on the Qur'an entitled *Tafsīr najm al-qur'ān*,[116] and reversed the formula. Although both commentaries have a conspicuous pedagogical and didactic character, al-Simnānī champions the primacy of direct master-disciple contact while al-Qāshānī seems to instruct the autodidact *in absentia*.[117] Al-Simnānī views the perfec-

112 Ibid.
113 Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 54.
114 Ibid., 45.
115 Ibid., 2.
116 Ibid., 3.
117 Ibid., 56.

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tion of the subtle substance of I-ness (*al-laṭīfa al-anā'iyya*) as the main result of mystical realization;[118] al-Qāshānī regards I-ness as a main impediment to it. Al-Simnānī sees oneness of being as a thoroughfare to and a conduit for antinomianism; al-Qāshānī considers it an invitation to focus on orthopraxy. *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān* may consequently be seen as the antithesis of and an antidote for *Tafsīr najm al-qur'ān*, which was commenced some 20 years before, though the exact completion date is unknown.[119]

The foregoing attempts to explain why in al-Qāshānī's works his methodology, his style and his content vary so widely from his master; why he is so reticent to explore all the meanings of *huwiyya* even though he clearly subscribes to them; why he bowdlerizes and expurgates Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics; and why he modifies Ibn ʿArabī's thought. It is because his audience was different, and because his purpose was different. This is not to suggest that all al-Qāshānī has achieved is the production of a sanitized and simplified conceptual outlook of Ibn ʿArabī's thought. It is indeed sanitized and simplified, but in emphasizing the uncontroversial aspects of Ibn ʿArabī's thought and accentuating the pedagogical facet of the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*, al-Qāshanī forges a new worldview as well. This new conceptual outlook is the cumulative effect of all the small changes, additions and omissions al-Qāshānī makes to Ibn ʿArabī's *Weltanschauung*, thereby creating a metaphysics that is not only faithful to his Sufi master, but also one more in keeping with the spirit of his time.

Al-Qāshānī's world, though one of more religious tolerance in general,[120] appears more restrictive in terms of the acceptance of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas.[121] Indeed, we know that al-Qāshānī was fending off attacks, not only from exoteric scholars, some of whom anathematized him, but also from powerful Sufi orders generally, and prominent Sufis specifically.[122] The Andalusian, conversely, enjoyed widespread celebrity and renown in his final years. Al-Suyūṭī lists scores of masters in the traditional sciences of Ḥadīth, *fiqh* and *tafsīr* who

118 Ibid., 66–68.

119 Ibid., 204. The *Ta'wīlāt* also seems to be heavily influenced by al-Qushayrī's commentary. Al-Qāshānī employs many of the techniques and methods of his illustrious predecessor. See the introduction for details.

120 Ergül, "Kāşānī," 20.

121 The correspondence between al-Qāshānī and al-Simnānī, one of the most influential Sufis of the Mongol era, provides ample proof for this.

122 Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 102. Al-Simnānī was incredibly influential, even after he distanced himself from the higher echelons of power. Indeed, he was one of the few Sufis who was known throughout the land. (Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 108.) Moreover, after Öljeytü's death, during the reign of Abū Saʿīd, he could legitimately claim to be the foremost Sufi in the Ilkhanid empire. (Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 161.)

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approved of Ibn ʿArabī during this period in Damascus. Many of these traditional scholars even considered the Sufi to be the pole (*quṭb*) of his era.[123] Ibn ʿArabī could therefore afford to be daring, vibrant and even a little reckless. He could afford to direct his works solely to the Sufi adepts and obscure it for everyone else.[124] Al-Qāshānī had no such luxury. In a new world of suspicion and cynicism towards Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, of many exoteric and Sufi detractors, and few allies,[125] he had to assume the mantle of defender and educator. And it is around these two objectives that all his works orbit. This meant that his works had to be instructive and succinct, they had to be faithful to the school but uncontroversial, they had to encapsulate the major tenets of Ibn ʿArabī's highly abstruse thought but be simple enough for a beginner. With all these demands, walking along the slenderest of tightropes, al-Qāshānī produced his lexicons and the *Taʾwīlāt*, and if it does not meet all the above criteria, it certainly comes close.

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123 See Al-Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-ghabī*, 3–6.

124 This does not mean, of course, that Ibn ʿArabī's impetus for the generation of the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* was not his spiritual unveiling. These works were the product of his gnosis, but their flagrant and intellectual articulation was the product of the celebrity and acceptance he enjoyed in his final years. (See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-ghabī*.)

125 This may be gleaned from al-Qāshānī's letter to al-Simnānī. (See above.) Also, if al-Qāshānī was moved to defend al-Anṣārī against an attack by Ibn Taymiyya by the composition of a commentary on his work (see above), he would, *a fortiori*, defend Ibn ʿArabī against an even more vicious and sustained attack by the same. (Wan Abdullah, "Herawī's Concept of *tawḥīd*," 98.) It must be stated that the dates of completion of the extant copies of al-Qāshānī's commentary of *Manāzil al-sāirīn* are between 728/1328? and 731/1331? which would mean it was certainly written after Ibn Taymiyya's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. (Al-Qāshānī, *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, 35.)

Furthermore, we know that al-Qāshānī's conciliatory disposition moved him to defend many of his Sufi contemporaries against accusations hurled at them by the exoteric elite. (Hādīzāda, *Majmuʿāt*, 103.) It is entirely consonant with his character, then, that he would defend a thinker who had exerted such a profound influence on him. It is worthy of mention, too, that *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn* became somewhat of a focal point during al-Qāshānī's era, where both exotericists and Sufis converged in order to establish the legitimacy of their viewpoint. This they achieved through commentaries that were written in light of their theological proclivities. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350), the ardent disciple of Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, uses it to relentlessly attack al-Tilimsānī and his "monist" (*ittiḥādī*) interpretation of the work. (Ovamir Anjum, "Sufism without Mysticism?," 166.) Al-Qāshānī, being an "interpreter and defender of Ibn ʿArabī" also "interpreted al-Anṣārī in light of Ibn ʿArabī." (Ibid., 179.)

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